Life is...

LIBERATION from IGNORANCE and FINDING true ENLIGHTENMENT

By

AiR

Atman in Ravi

Discover the True Purpose of Life

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 (01-11)
Life

CHAPTER 2 (12-17)
A Quest for the Truth

CHAPTER 3 (18-26)
Who are We in Reality?

CHAPTER 4 (27-34)
What is the Purpose of Life?

CHAPTER 5 (35-45)
Ignorance stops us from Liberation

CHAPTER 6 (46-51)
Realizing the Truth

CHAPTER 7 (52-59)
After Realization, What?

CHAPTER 8 (60-71)
What is True Enlightenment?

CHAPTER 9 (72-78)
Isn't Life all about Being Happy?

CHAPTER 10 (79-83)
How can we achieve Ultimate Bliss and Peace?

CHAPTER 11 (84-89)
Can there be a Life without Misery and Suffering?

CHAPTER 12 (90-102)
What is the Ultimate Goal of Life?

CHAPTER 13 (103-108)
Life is Liberation from Ignorance and Finding true Enlightenment

(109-117)
Afterword

(118-121)
Poem

(122-137)
About the Author

PREFACE

What is Life all about? As I live blissfully and peacefully, every moment of my Life, I feel that many people in this world don't realize the Truth. Most people exist, but they don't truly live. They just zoom from womb to tomb, and then Life is over! They don't stop to think, "What is the purpose of my Life? What am I truly seeking?"

If you ask people what they want in Life, you will find some very common answers. People want to be happy and they want to be successful. People want name, fame, and fun. Everybody wants pleasure, nobody wants pain. But most unfortunately, they rush through Life, not realizing that Life is a journey, not a destination.

In the pursuit of happiness, success, and achievement, people don't realize that though they may gain a lot of these, they lose their most precious gift – Life itself! Life is a limited resource and people exchange their Life for possessions which finally don't belong to them. In this transaction called Life, they are bad investors because they are exchanging Life for pleasure which is not eternal and everlasting. In the chase to be an ace, they face suffering, worry, and anxiety that destroy the very happiness they are seeking.

As most of humanity wakes up every morning, there is

fear, worry, anxiety, and stress. These are like unpleasant seeds embedded in sweet fruits. People enjoy the pleasures of Life, but with every bite of pleasure, there is pain.

What is the biggest mistake we make? We don't realize that we are destroying the very foundation of happiness - Peace! While we seek to be happy, we lose our peace of mind due to our own desires and subsequent disappointments.

Our biggest problem is our own ignorance. We are ignorant about the fact that we destroy our own happiness. Happiness is like a shadow. The more you chase it, the further it goes away. If one wants to be happy, one must learn to live in the moment, with peace, joy, and bliss.

There are many things that we are ignorant about. If we overcome this ignorance, we can be liberated from suffering. Instead of doing so, we continue to do things that make us suffer. We don't find true Enlightenment, Enlightenment that can eradicate the darkness in which we live and light up our Life with joy. For instance, we think success is happiness. But this is a myth. We seek success to be happy, but not all successful people are happy. Is it true that more success gives people more happiness? Of course not! In fact, the reverse is true. Success is not happiness, happiness is success. If we are happy, then we are already successful as we have achieved the very objective of success. Unfortunately, we

live with the myth that success equals happiness. We don't realize the Truth! We live in ignorance that makes us suffer. We don't understand the fact that Life is all about Liberation from this Ignorance and Finding true Enlightenment.

When I went on a quest to discover the true meaning of Life, I experienced some profound realizations. Realizations that made me discover that most people suffer because of ignorance. We are ignorant about the Truth of what Life is all about.

The purpose of our Life, in fact, is to realize that we are prisoners, slaves who are imprisoned in the cages of misery and misfortune. We continue to live and suffer due to our ignorance. I experienced my 'Aha!' moment when I realized the true meaning of L I F E. It is, LIBERATION from IGNORANCE and FINDING true ENLIGHTENMENT.

This book about Life is an effort to share my experience of Life, how I too lived in ignorance till I was 46. When my Spiritual Master led me on a quest, I realized the Truth. For the last 5 years, I have been living blissfully and peacefully as the happiest man in the world. This book will share my realization of what Life is all about. It will not only make us realize how we live in ignorance but also give solutions on how to overcome this ignorance. It is a recipe for bliss, peace, and joy, a map that shows the way to Liberation from Ignorance and a path that helps us Find true Enlightenment.

CHAPTER 1

LIFE

We all live but not all of us know the true meaning of Life. The time period between birth and death is called Life. Although we are alive in our mother's womb, we still don't consider that to be Life. That is why our 'birthday' is the day that we are delivered on earth. Then we live, we grow from being a baby to a toddler, then to a teenager and adult. Finally, we grow old and we die. This is a normal Life cycle. Some people are fortunate to live beyond 100 years and some people die young. But Life is only the period between birth and death. The moment we die, our Life is over.

Death is certain. Everybody who is born must die. The body is cremated or buried and returns to dust. Some people believe that with death, it is game over, while others believe that death is not the end. We are reborn into a new Life.

While the period between birth and death is titled 'Life' and the whole world knows that we live, how many people have actually realized the true meaning of Life? What is this journey all about? What is the purpose of our birth, our Life on earth? Where do we come from and where do we go? Not many people ponder on the question, "What is Life?"

Raj believed that Life was all about having fun. He used to say, "Life is short, make it sweet. Make the best of it before the journey is over!" To him, Life was all about having fun before Life was done. Raj was fortunate to be rich and successful. He was passionate about his money, his

success, his name and fame. He had a wife and children. He was a foodie and also loved to travel. He was a golfer; he loved to party and to drink with his friends. He only had one problem. He had no time!

Every day, Raj would plan for a party, the venue, what he would wear, and what pictures he would show his friends from his last visit to Prague and Budapest. Raj used to say that his Life was just zooming away. He had little time for his kids, but he made sure that their mother didn't need to work and just looked after his children. There was no guilt and Life was great.

Time passed and the money in his bank account increased by leaps and bounds. But what he didn't realize was that his Life was becoming shorter and shorter. One day, suddenly, because of a cardiac arrest, Raj died. He was not even 60! To the world, his death was tragic because the average Life span is 75 and he seemed to have died young.

Raj might have lived a flamboyant Life. He might have enjoyed a lot of pleasures, but his Life had no peace. His mind was constantly tormented with worries, stress, and anxiety. From outside, he looked excited. But inside, he was always very tense. Raj left behind so much money that it led to disputes within his family. But he could not see all this – he was no more alive! He had been too busy making money and had never anticipated death to be lurking around the corner. One day suddenly, it arrived and then,

it was all over. You can't request death, "Give me a few days or even a few moments!" It comes suddenly, and Life is over.

What was the purpose of his Life? It never occurred to Raj because he thought Life was about having fun. Sadly, he did not even use his wealth in service and charity for doing good to others. To him, Life was having fun with family and friends. "Why should I be responsible for the suffering of the world?" he used to tell people who approached him for their humanitarian needs. He would rather spend his money on his foreign whiskey or lobsters that he needed to import for his upcoming party.

Many people live like Raj. But is this what Life is all about? We have a choice. We can live the way we like. But the question is - Do we understand what Life is? Have we paused to introspect on what the true purpose of Life is?

Raj had a very close friend, Manohar, whose wife was Komal. They chose to live a very different Life. Although they were modestly rich and Manohar was busy expanding his business, they used to spend time together taking care of the children and living a simple Life. Every week they would visit some or the other charitable organization, whether it was a blind school or a home for the aged. They would cook food for the poor and along with their children and friends, they would reach out to those who were suffering and try to make a difference in their lives. They experienced a tremendous sense of

fulfillment as they shared their happiness with others. Their Life was full of peace and bliss. The residents of the destitute homes would make several requests for clothes, beds, and wheelchairs, and the couple would network with others to try to collect whatever was needed. They had a lot of time, because their Life was simple. There was not much partying and socializing. They believed in the Law of Karma. They subscribed to the belief that what goes around, comes around. Whatever they were sowing in this Life, would definitely come back to them in their current Life or they would reap it in their future Life. But they knew for sure that their actions were a good investment.

They were also a devout couple and taught their children to pray. They would visit different temples and their holidays were often to pilgrimages. Their Life was quite different when compared to Raj's Life. But ironically, while they were not wealthier than him, they were much happier. Their joy did not come from the pleasures that money could buy but they enjoyed bliss that came from contentment in what they did. In contrast to Raj, their Life was full of peace. There was no fear, worry, stress or anxiety. However, a tragedy later in Life negatively impacted them. It changed the way they looked at Life.

One day, when Raj was alive, he had called Manohar to his home. Raj was caught in a scam and had received a notice from the tax department. Raj was very stressed at the

thought of losing his wealth and his blood pressure went up. He requested Manohar, who was an expert in taxation, to help him resolve the case. Manohar did his best to reduce the liability, but the incident affected Raj's health. Manohar used to often tell Raj, "What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world but lost his own Soul?"

When we look at the lives of such people, what does it inspire us to think? What is the purpose of Life? We all want to be happy but happiness is not the same for everybody. For some, happiness is just success, name, and fame. Some people believe that happiness comes from money that can buy them cars and homes. They don't understand that this is not happiness, but rather only pleasures that give temporary happiness and will never fulfill our greed. We are always craving for more, always seeking, desiring and living a Life of both achievements and disappointments that come in cycles.

Is Life all about success, our social status or our wealth? Is success all about pleasures that come from our possessions or is success more a matter of contentment and fulfillment? We read about 2 friends, one was wealthier, the other happier. What is more important in Life? Is Life all about chasing money or is there a deeper meaning and purpose to it?

When Deepak, another friend of Raj and Manohar, discussed this with his Spiritual Master, he was surprised at the insight he got. Deepak lived a Life that was sometimes like Raj's and sometimes like Manohar's. While

he contemplated what he must choose to do, he was not able to decide. There was a battle within, with his senses desiring all the pleasures that Raj had but an inner voice calling him to live like Manohar. He couldn't do both. The first option was like living just for pleasures and possessions, while the other option was going in the opposite direction, living with contentment and fulfillment. Because he was torn apart seeing the lives of his two friends, he took his case to his mentor and advisor. The Master asked Deepak the question, "What is the purpose of Life? However much money we earn, will it ultimately belong to us? We may build several homes and own several assets, but ultimately nothing will belong to us." The Master ruled out living like Raj, and as Deepak started contemplating living a Life as Manohar and Komal lived, the Master revealed another paradigm that transformed Deepak's Life.

The Master said, "Life has a purpose. Most people are least bothered to find out why they are born as human beings." He explained to Deepak how Raj suffered so much misery and pain, far more than all the gain that came from his success and money. But he also revealed a profound truth to Deepak. While Komal's family was far happier and peaceful, they too had suffered - one of their children had suddenly died due to a tragic illness. They had been good people all their Life. Why should such a misfortune come on them? They never cheated, lied or hurt anybody. They were shocked by the tragic death of their child. Manohar's

religious beliefs underwent a change as he began to doubt the existence of God.

The Master explained to Deepak that nobody can escape suffering. As long as we live, there will be pleasure and pain, sun and rain, loss and gain. Such is this journey called Life. Deepak was astonished when he heard the Spiritual Master discuss what Life was all about. He questioned the Master why this was so, "Why did Komal and Manohar suffer despite leading such good lives?" The Master tried to explain that Life is a long journey. We live and die, but our actions are recorded and carried forward to our next Life. The cycle goes on and on, he explained to Deepak. Deepak questioned the Master, "Is God cruel that he makes us suffer again and again? Does he enjoy the pain that we experience?" "Of course not!" replied the Spiritual Master. "There is a way out of misery and suffering in Life." "What is the way?" Deepak asked.

The Master explained, "Life is not just about being happy. It is not about making others happy either. While it is good to help others, it will still not liberate us from this cycle of death and rebirth." He explained to Deepak that we people live a Life of ignorance. Because of this ignorance, we constantly suffer. We suffer physical pain of the body, just as we suffer from fear, anger, hate, worry, revenge, and anxiety of the mind. To add to this suffering, our ego suffers in agony when its desires are

not fulfilled and it bursts into flames of anger. We all experience this triple suffering of the body, mind, and ego. “Tell me,” said Deepak, “is there a way out of this suffering? Should this beautiful gift of Life end in misery and pain?” The Master smiled, and Deepak was caught by the radiance of his smile. Deepak realized how blissful and peaceful the Master seemed to be. “Do you also suffer?” he asked the wise man. His mentor laughed and said, “No, with the grace of the Divine, I have realized the Truth about Life. I have realized who we truly are and why we are here.” Deepak requested the Master to tell him more. He asked, “How can I escape from this constant yoyo of pleasure and pain? I too want to live a Life that is peaceful and blissful. Is there a way to eternal joy and happiness?” The Master smiled and continued explaining the saga called Life.

“We human beings live a Life of ignorance. We don’t know our Ultimate Purpose. We get caught in the illusion called Life and before we know it, our journey is over. But it is not finished yet. Our actions must get their corresponding reaction. Our account must be settled and thus we are born again. Everybody who is born must die. But along the way, we suffer. There is a way to escape from this cycle of death and rebirth. If only we realize the Truth of who we are and why we are here, we can escape from this misery and pain. In fact, we can escape from rebirth itself.”

Deepak was intrigued. Being highly intelligent but having no spiritual knowledge, he urged the Master to go on. The Master explained that because we think we are a body-mind complex, we suffer as we live, due to our own mind and our own thoughts. If we want to overcome suffering, we must first transcend the mind and ego, then only will we be liberated from pain. Deepak was both excited and interested. "Please continue," he said, "I want to be liberated from misery and pain. Tell me what I must do?"

The Master replied, "You must first overcome all ignorance." He was drinking a glass of milk. He asked Deepak to bring a bottle of mineral water. He then told Deepak to pour the water into the glass that he had just finished drinking milk from. As Deepak poured the clean water into the Master's glass, it fogged with the remnants of the milk that was in the glass. "You see," said the Master, "you did not clean the glass and your clean water has become dirty! If you want to go on this journey to discover the Truth about Life, you must first completely cleanse your mind. Unless your mind is cleansed of old habits and beliefs, whatever you pour into the mind will get contaminated. The mind is enveloped by ignorance and the first challenge is to overcome this ignorance. Only then you will be able to realize the Truth." Deepak bowed down to the Master and said, "I am willing to do anything and everything possible. Tell me, O Master, how can I start this journey?"

The Master revealed, "Do you know what Life is? Life is

Liberation from Ignorance and Finding true Enlightenment. If you want to find true Enlightenment, you must be liberated. And if you want to be liberated, you must overcome the ignorance in which you live. For this, you must go on a quest, a search. Only then will you discover the Truth about Life. This is called Realization. This Realization will liberate you from all suffering." "Master," said Deepak, "help me realize the Truth. I want to start this journey now."

"

What is Life about? Is it just fun and Dance?
Or is Life about taking risks and a chance?
Life is about Liberation, not just about achievement,
It is overcoming ignorance, finding true Enlightenment.

"

CHAPTER 1 IN A NUTSHELL

Life

- We all live but not all of us know the true meaning of Life. We think that the time period between birth and death is called Life.

- Some people believe that with death, it is game over, while others believe that death is not the end. We are reborn into a new Life.

- We human beings live a Life of ignorance. We don't know our Ultimate Purpose. We get caught in the illusion called Life and before we know it, our journey is over.

- Nobody can escape suffering. As long as we live, there will be both pleasure and pain.

- We live and die but our actions are recorded and carried forward to our next Life.

- If we want to discover the Truth about Life, we must first completely cleanse our mind. Unless our mind is cleansed of old habits and beliefs, whatever we pour into the mind will get contaminated.

- Life is not just about being happy or making others happy. Our Ultimate Purpose is to get liberation from this cycle of death and rebirth.

CHAPTER 2

A QUEST FOR THE TRUTH

"What must I do?" asked Deepak, "to be liberated from all misery and suffering?" The Master said, "Take a 3-month sabbatical. Leave the world for a short period of time and go on a quest for the Truth." Deepak was confused. "You mean, I should leave my work, my family, and go on a retreat?" "Yes," said the Master, "otherwise it may take you 3 years, even 30 years, to get to the Truth!"

Deepak seemed obsessed. He spoke to his wife about being away for 3 months. He promised her that it would be worth it because he was going in search of a secret that would give eternal happiness. His wife was understanding, and she agreed. Deepak delegated his work and went to his Master to start the quest.

The Master lived in a monastery, up in the mountains. It was a quiet place, without distractions and disturbances – no people, no television, no newspapers or magazines. No telephones could be used in the monastery. Once a day, people in the monastery were allowed to go down to the village where they would get the network to check their devices. However, the break was limited to 30 minutes a day in the beginning and as the days passed by, it became even lesser. There were not many people in the monastery. The food was simple, and a lot of time was spent in reading, discussions and in silence. There was a

clear objective, up there in the mountains. It was to go within, on a quest to realize the Truth.

Deepak had a small bag of simple, loose clothes. The weather in the monastery was neither too hot, nor too cold. From up in the mountains, one could see a beautiful sunrise and also enjoy the spectacular colours of a beautiful sunset.

The most unique part of this monastery was a huge library. It had hundreds of books, well catalogued and sorted, with several tables and comfortable chairs. It had bright lights and was open 24 hours a day. Adjacent to the library was an audio-visual room that had several volumes of audios and videos that could help seekers progress on the quest for the Truth. The Master also had a few assistants who would help seekers clarify doubts and if they were not able to do so, the Master would himself answer questions when he would come to the meditation hall in the mornings and in the evenings after the sessions of silence.

For Deepak, it was a unique experience. He had never been to a meditation centre or to a retreat up in the mountains, but his passion for the Truth had prepared him for the journey, the quest. On the very first day, he did nothing except remain in silence. An administrator oriented him with his room, the facilities, the library, the audio-visual room. Of course, Deepak wanted to communicate with the outside

world. He was finally taken to the village in the evening after dinner to speak to his family.

Deepak had been waiting to meet the Master, but because he had not attended any sessions, he did not get a chance. After an early first night in the monastery, an exhausted Deepak went to sleep. Sleep came automatically because of the amount of walking and work that people did up there in the mountains. Deepak too was assigned to do some chores in the kitchen, which he had opted for, on the very first day.

The next morning, Deepak woke up to see a beautiful sunrise. There was magic in the air. Soon thereafter, he went to the meditation hall for chanting that created vibrations of peace. Then came the Master's voice. "For 30 minutes," said the Master, "ponder on the question – Who am I? Do not let the mind wander. Stick to the question." Deepak was sincere and he thought about who he truly was - his name, his family, his education, his profession, his likes, his dislikes and his hobbies. As the period of silence ended, he had an opportunity to speak to the Master. He told the Master what he had thought about in those 30 minutes. He questioned the Master, "Why is it that we should ponder on the question?" The Master explained, "For you Deepak, it is very important as you are on a quest to realize the Truth about Life. You think you are Deepak. But that is only your name, isn't it? When you were born, did you have a name?" "No!" replied

Deepak. "Then why is it," said the Master, "that all through Life you keep telling everybody – I am Deepak?" Deepak awakened to his first lesson. He realized that Deepak was only his name.

During the day, he spent time reading some books. He picked up a book by Ramana Maharishi titled, 'Who am I?' and was quite confused about what was written. He then picked up another book, "Tattva Bodha" which shook him up. It spoke about what the human body is made of. We have hands and legs, just as we have eyes, a nose, and ears. We know that we have a heart, kidneys, and a brain amongst other organs. Beneath our skin, there is muscle, tissue, blood and bone. Inside the bone, there is bone marrow, but this is the gross physical body. Are we this body in reality? Or are we the mind? The mind itself is a subtle part of our existence. The 'subtle body' consists of the memory, the intellect, and the ego, apart from the 'thought factory' – the mind itself. While we know that all these exist, Deepak realized that they were different from the gross body. They were the subtle body. To him, he understood the body to be the hardware and the subtle part of the body - mind, ego, memory, and intellect to be the software. On day two itself, he was intrigued by the question that the Master had posed in the morning, "Who am I?" For Deepak, one thing was sure. The quest for the Truth about Life had begun.

“Life is all about going on a quest,
Putting all our thoughts and beliefs to a test.
This is my name, but this is not me,
If not body and mind, who could I be?”

CHAPTER 2 IN A NUTSHELL

A Quest for the Truth

- To be liberated from misery and sorrow one should take guidance from a realized Spiritual Master and go on a Quest.
- If one is passionate about realizing the Truth, one should leave the world for a short period of time to seek realization of the Truth.
- If one is determined and has a clear objective to attain liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth, one should seek answers to the questions related to Life and rebirth.
- Before this, one should try to find out who we truly are by asking the question, "Who am I?"
- Throughout our Life we live in ignorance thinking that we are the name by which people call us. This is the first lesson. When we were born, we did not have a name, did we?
- Are we this body in reality? Or are we the mind? The mind itself is a subtle part of our existence. The 'subtle body' consists of the memory, the intellect, and the ego, apart from the 'thought factory' – the mind itself.
- The body is the hardware. The subtle part of the body or the software includes the mind, ego, memory, and intellect.

CHAPTER 3

WHO ARE WE IN REALITY?

Suddenly, Deepak latched on to this question. It seemed to have gone deep within him. He had discussed with a few seekers in the library the challenge he faced. Of course, we have a body. But who is it that is saying, "This is my body, or my hand or my head?" The seekers called it the 'self'. "Who is the 'true self'?" probed Deepak. He was lucky to meet the Master and placed this question before him. The Master was brief but very clear. "If we aren't this body, Deepak, then which body are we? Today, you look like this. But when you were in school, you were tiny. You were born as a baby weighing a few pounds. Was that you?" "Of course," replied Deepak. "And when were you born?" "The 4th of March is my birth date," he replied. "Does it mean, you were not alive on the 3rd of March?" Deepak thought and said, "No, I was alive. I was very much kicking inside my mother's womb, waiting to come out." "That's great, you remember!" said the Master. Deepak smiled. The Master asked, "When did you actually come alive?" As Deepak was thinking, the Master further questioned, "Was it 3 months before birth, 6 months before birth or earlier?" After a bit of thinking, Deepak said, "Come to think of it, I was born when the 2 cells from my parents fertilized to become a zygote. I believe that was the first sign of my existence." "But then, Deepak, you were just one tiny cell. Two cells from your parents became one cell. You were nothing. Slowly, the

body was created. It was born. But we all believe that we are this body," said the Master.

"Even science accepts today that every cell of our body dies and is reborn every 7 to 10 years. Some cells die much sooner and some later. But essentially, after 10 years, your body is made up of completely new cells. So, if you are 40 years old, you have already changed your body 4 times," explained the Master.

The Master was then asked to go down to the village to attend a death ceremony. He invited Deepak to join him. As they walked, they talked. He explained to Deepak, "We human beings think we are this body. Do you have a group photograph of your class in your school days?" "Sure," replied Deepak. "But if I showed you that photograph, you would never be able to recognize me," said Deepak. "You see," said the Master, "we think ourselves to be the body in that picture, a body that is constantly changing, a body that is ours, but is not us."

They reached the home of the deceased in the village and the Master was requested to say a prayer. Deepak saw the family cry. After they took the body to be cremated, the discussion continued. The Master had a chance to ask Deepak, "You saw the dead body. Was that the person who was alive?" "Of course not," replied Deepak, "it was just the dead body. It was dead. It had no Life inside it." "Where did the Life go," asked the Master. "God knows,"

said Deepak, "to heaven or hell, depending on how that man lived."

The Master made Deepak sit on a bench. "The mind," he said, "believes in so many things. Have you ever seen heaven or hell? The body dies and it perishes right here on earth. Then who would go to heaven? Where is heaven? How can one reach heaven?" Deepak was completely lost. It took him a lot of time and several pages of a notebook that he scribbled in to make his first realization, "The body dies, but we are not the body." He realized that we are the ME – the Mind and the Ego, that is immediately reborn in another body based on our Karma, our past actions.

In the several books that he read in the first few days, Deepak's focus was on just one question, "Who am I?" With his Master's guidance, he realized that we are not this body. We are the ones who wear the body. Throughout Life, we, the ego, mind and body, perform several actions. Based on these actions, our destiny unfolds. Ultimately, the body dies, but all our actions that are unsettled, become the cause of our next birth. Some people are born in fortunate circumstances, and some in unfortunate ones, based on their Karma, their cumulative unsettled actions of all previous lives.

Deepak started reading a lot on Karma, the Universal Law of Action and Reaction. He realized that it was like a boomerang. What goes around comes around. He was

convinced that as we sow, so shall we reap. Why else, he realized, would a newborn baby suffer? The newborn baby has a new body, but the one inside, ME – the Mind and Ego, is not new. It is reborn with its past unsettled actions carried forward. Deepak had never understood this law so clearly, but now he realized why it is stated that what we give, is what we get.

As Deepak sat in silence that evening, he pondered on one very important word that he repeated twice and he marked it in his notebook – 'Neti, Neti' which meant, 'not this, not this'. He realized that we are not the body, but he was completely confused when he read that we are not even the mind! He took his confusion to the Master. The Master made him write 3 more words below 'Neti Neti'. They were 'Tat Tvam Asi' and explained that it meant – 'Thou Art That,' which meant – 'You are That'.

"Deepak", he said, "you have done well to realize that you are not the body. But you still think you are the mind. You believe the ME – Mind and Ego, is reborn as per Karma, don't you?" "Of course," said Deepak. "That is what the monks explained to me. I read so many books, and I was amazed to learn about this Universal Law." The Master said, "That is only graduation in spirituality. Let me take you to post-graduation. If you realize the second Truth, then half your battle is won." "What is that?" asked Deepak.

"Most of the world believes in the Law of Karma and it is true, no doubt that we are reborn based on our Karma. But this way, we will be born again and again. We will suffer despite whether we do good or bad. Have you read about the Buddha?" "Yes," replied Deepak, "I read about how he left his palace, his beautiful wife and child and went on a quest for the Truth." "So how does one escape suffering?" asked the Master. "By doing good deeds," said Deepak. "If we do good deeds, then good things will unfold in our Life." "Sure," said the Master, "But every human being who is born must suffer. "Therefore, while good Karma will create fortunate circumstances of our next birth, we cannot escape from rebirth. Every birth experiences suffering."

Deepak had been doing a lot of reading. "Tell me, Master, how can we be liberated from suffering?" he asked. The Master walked Deepak to the top of the hill where there was nobody else. He asked Deepak a funny question as he made him look into a pond of water up there at the top. "Can you see your eyes, your nose and your head?" "Of course," said Deepak. The Master questioned further, "But can you see your mind? You can even see an X-ray of your heart, your kidney, your brain. But where is the mind?" Deepak said, "The mind is constantly making me worry and making me fear. I know that it is there somewhere in my head." The Master chuckled and said, "Tomorrow morning, before meditation, meet me at 5 am. Bring me your mind and I will take out all your fear, worry

and anxiety." He left Deepak pondering and went off to his room.

Deepak didn't sleep that night. He kept thinking where his mind was. He knew where the brain was, but he knew that thoughts came from all over the body. There were nerve fibres all over the body and the mind was not restricted in the head itself. Thoughts popped like popcorn in a popcorn machine, triggered by the 5 senses - the eyes, the nose, the ears, the tongue and the skin. He tried very hard. He tried recollecting if he had read about it in any of the books or if any seeker would have spoken about it, but nothing gave him the answer. He couldn't discover where the mind was.

At 5 in the morning, the Master knocked at his door. Deepak was awake. "Oh Master, what is it? What brings you to my door?" "I promised you I will take away all your fear, worry, and anxiety. Here I am. Tell me where your mind is and we will deal with the rascal," said the Master. "Sorry," said Deepak, "I could not find my mind." The Master replied, "How can you find the mind? It doesn't exist! It is an illusion. It is just a bundle of thoughts. The mind and ego, ME is the cause of suffering." While the mind doesn't really exist, it is the one that is constantly thinking and creating stress, worry, and anxiety.

He made Deepak open his notebook and read the words he had noted there, 'Not this, not this' and 'Thou art That'.

"Did you find the meaning of this?" he asked Deepak. "No Master," he replied, "I tried, but could not understand."

The Master asked Deepak, "What makes a computer work?" After some thought, Deepak said "Hardware and software, both are needed." The Master then explained, "If you had the hardware and the software, but there was no power supply, would your computer work?" "Of course not!" exclaimed Deepak, "How could it? There must be a source of power – electricity, battery or UPS for a computer to work." So explained the Master, "In our body too, there is hardware - the gross physical body, the software – the ME, Mind and Ego and the power supply – the Soul, the Spirit or the Atman. We are not the body. You already know it. We are not even the ME – Mind and Ego. Then who are we?" Deepak pondered.

The silence seemed to last for ages, till the Master continued, "While the ME - Mind and Ego, seems to be us and makes us experience rebirth again and again, in reality, we are the power, the Divine Soul – that is our true identity. The Mind and Ego, stop us from this realization because on realization, the ME will cease to exist. Deepak, Neti, Neti – not the body, not the mind, Tat Tvam Asi – Thou Art That. You are the Divine Soul."

Deepak felt as if something was piercing deep inside his heart. There was a feeling of 'Aha' in his head. And though he could not believe it, he realized he was not the body, he

was not even the mind. He was the very Life that existed inside him, the power that made his heart beat from birth to death. He was the Soul!

“

Who are we in reality...
The ego, the body or the mind?
The body will die, the mind and ego will fly,
We are the Divine soul, we will find.

”

CHAPTER 3 IN A NUTSHELL

Who are We in Reality?

- Of course, we have a body. But who is it that is saying, "This is my body, or my hand or my head?" We call it the 'self'. "Who is the 'true self'?"
- Only a few lucky ones understand that if we are this body, then which body are we? Today, we look like this. But when we were in school, we were tiny.
- When we see a dead body we realize that the one who was alive in it is not there. It is just a dead body.
- Then we ponder where the one who was alive in the body has departed – heaven or hell.
- The mind believes in so many things. We must realize that the body dies and perishes on earth itself. Then who would go to heaven or hell to bear the fruit of our good or bad deeds?
- The body dies, but we are not the body. The ME – the Mind and the Ego, is immediately reborn in another body based on our Karma, our past actions.
- The mind doesn't really exist, it is the one that is constantly thinking and creating stress, worry, and anxiety.
- *Neti, Neti* – not the body, not the mind, *Tat Tvam Asi* – Thou Art That. We are not this body, mind, or ego. We are the Divine Soul.

CHAPTER 4

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF LIFE?

A strange transformation came upon Deepak. When people called him "Deepak," he found it a little strange. Was he Deepak or was it just his name? He felt the strong realization that although he was the body, the mind, and the ego, which appeared to be one unit of his human existence, he realized that his true identity, his true self was the Divine Soul. Having realized this, he was constantly seeking to meet the Master.

The Master too was encouraging and supportive because it was rare for him to find a seeker who could realize this Truth so soon. Deepak seemed blessed. The Master knew that Deepak was deeply devoted and connected to God. There was love and longing in his heart for the Divine. Probably, it was the Divine grace that helped Deepak realize that he was the Soul.

But was it that easy? The ME - the Mind and Ego constantly distracted Deepak from his realization. Deepak had to fight to be what he realized he was. One evening, he asked the Master, "Tell me, my Master, if I am not the body, not the mind, but the Soul, then what is my purpose on earth?" The Master explained, "You know who you are. That realization has dawned upon you. But unless you are firmly rooted with the realization that you are the Divine Soul, you cannot go further." The Master tried to guide

Deepak on his spiritual quest. He questioned him, "Now what happens to your Karma?" Deepak thought, and questioned, "The Karma belongs to me, doesn't it Master? The mind and the ego belong to me. But now, I am not the mind and the ego. Then what happens to my Karma?" "You are right. If you realize that you are not the mind and ego, then the Karma doesn't belong to you." Deepak was stunned. The Master, seeing this, explained further, "At the death of the body, one of the two things happens – either ME, the Mind and Ego is reborn based on its past Karma or one is liberated from the cycle of rebirth if one realizes the Truth that one is not the ME – the Mind and Ego."

"Beware Deepak!" said the Master, "If you let your mind dominate you in this quest and you continue to live as ME – Mind and Ego, then you too will be reborn. You will not escape from the earthly cycle. The mind is such that it does not let us dwell in our realization of the truth. Despite our realization, it will pull us back. Such is the mind!" The Master narrated a story to Deepak.

Suchitra suffered a lot because her husband had a rascal mind. In fact, he had a 'rat mind' – the mind always thought he was a rat. She went to many psychiatrists because every night he would wake Suchitra up by making rat-like noises. Not just that, he would go to the refrigerator and sniff, looking for cheese thinking he was a rat. He would even romance with Suchitra like they were

two mice. Suchitra took him to the best psychiatrist who treated her husband, making him understand who he was - he was not a rat, and he should not behave like the rat. Finally, the mind of the rat-man understood that he should not behave like a rat. After all, he was a man! Suchitra was relieved. In the last session, the Doctor was having a conversation and the man asked the doctor, "One last question, sir. I am not a rat and I promise you from now onwards, I will not trouble anyone like a rat. But what about the big black cat that lives across my house and chases me? Who will explain to the cat that I am not a rat?" Deepak was amazed at the clarity of thought of his Master. He realized that he has to be very careful of his mind, otherwise it will not permit him to spiritually evolve.

"How can I live with the realization, O Master?" Deepak sought guidance from his Master. "You must follow the 4 principles that are essential to succeed in your realization and be liberated. The 4 principles are living with Discrimination, with Dispassion or Detachment, with Discipline and with the Desire for the Divine and for Liberation."

Deepak took his Master's words seriously and started reading about them. He learned that the mind is a rascal. It is like a monkey - it goes on producing thoughts and makes us jump from thought to thought. It produces a thought practically every second. We need to slow down our mind. Then, we need to live with discrimination by

activating our intellect. Most of us live with ignorance and go by whatever the mind says. Thus, we do not achieve Liberation.

The second principle is dispassion or detachment. We human beings are attached to people and possessions. We are ignorant about the truth that nothing belongs to us, nothing is ours and because of this ignorance, we fail.

The third principle is discipline. We need strong discipline to transcend the mind and the ego and to be free. Otherwise, the senses of the body, the wandering of the mind and the craving of the ego will make us sink in the illusion of this world.

Finally, we must desire Liberation. We must seek the Divine, otherwise, we will be carried away by the world of allurements and attractions. Most of us are so enamoured by the world that we are unable to transcend the desires and cravings of our mind.

As Deepak was reading, he was wondering how he had lived a Life of ignorance for so many decades. He thought of all his friends and how none of them had come even close to this path of spirituality, of awakening the spirit and realizing the Truth. Deepak experienced this profound realization as he completed one month at the retreat. The days had flown by. The routine engrossed him. There was so much peace and bliss, that Deepak now

went down to the village to connect with the world only once or twice a week, although he was allowed to do it every day. The grace and love of his Master made a tremendous impact on his realization. Slowly, but steadily, Deepak was transcending his mind and ego. But he was very concerned about why he had lived in ignorance for so many years. He tried to make a list of all his foolish beliefs and wrote them on a page of his notebook to discuss with his Master.

Deepak had always believed that if a black cat crossed his path, it was an ill omen. He would wait for somebody else to cross the path before he would continue on his way. "Why does the mind make such a fool of us?" he pondered. "Why do we live following such superstitions?" he wondered.

By now, Deepak was very clear about who he was. Not the body, not the mind – he was the power within. But what was the purpose of Life? This was still hazy to him. He tried to discuss this with his Master. The Master explained that most people in Life seek pleasure. They are excited, but they suffer. Some seek peace and they achieve a state of bliss. But they too live in ignorance and suffer. Only those who discover the true purpose of Life are liberated from both ignorance and suffering.

Deepak tried to introspect. He thought of Raj's Life and how Raj suffered and died. Then he thought about Manohar and Komal and how although they were content and peaceful, still they had experienced misery. He then

introspected on his own Life and how he was shuttling between pleasure and pain, loss and gain. The time at the monastery had made him realize that in the end, it was all like a game of monopoly. Everything would be packed up in a box when the time was over! He could understand that the ignorance of his friends would cause them to be reborn and regardless of whether they had good Karma or bad Karma, they would ultimately suffer and die, only to be reborn again. "No," resolved Deepak, "I don't want to be born again and again and suffer. I want to achieve the Ultimate Goal of Liberation."

Having decided this, he went to the Master and prayed, "Dear Mentor, take me from darkness to light. Take me from illusion to the truth. Help me to overcome my ignorance and liberate me from this cycle of death and rebirth." The Master responded with folded hands, "Deepak", he said, "this path is not for the weak and weary. Everything we speak of may look magical, but it is a difficult path to tread. We need a lot of hard work to achieve both realization and liberation. I can show you the path, but you will have to walk. You must overcome all the ignorance that we human beings are enveloped in. If you have faith and the Divine Grace is upon you, you will achieve the Ultimate Goal and be liberated. You will achieve the Ultimate Purpose of Life."

“

What is the purpose of Life on earth?
Why are we given this human birth?
Is it to do good Karma and to be born again?
Or to be liberated from suffering and pain?

”

CHAPTER 4 IN A NUTSHELL

What is the Purpose of Life?

- At the death of the body, one of the two things happens – either ME, the Mind and Ego is reborn based on its past Karma or one is liberated from the cycle of death and rebirth if one realizes the Truth that one is not the ME – the Mind and Ego.
- If we let our mind dominate us in this quest and live as ME – Mind and Ego, then we too will be reborn. We will not escape. The mind is such, it does not let us dwell in our realization of the Truth. Despite our realization, it will pull us back.
- Our purpose is to attain liberation and unite with the Divine. But for this, we need to live with the realization of the Truth.
- To live with the realization we must follow the 4 principles that are essential to succeed in our realization and be liberated. They are: living with Discrimination, with Dispassion or Detachment, with Discipline and with the Desire for the Divine and for Liberation.
- Unless we are firmly rooted in the realization that we are the Divine Soul, we cannot go further.
- If we realize that we are not the mind and ego, then the Karma doesn't belong to us. This way we can transcend Karma and be free from rebirth. Otherwise, regardless of whether we earned good Karma or bad Karma, we would ultimately suffer and die, only to be reborn again.

CHAPTER 5

IGNORANCE STOPS US FROM LIBERATION

In the pursuit to discover the true meaning of Life, Deepak knew one thing – Life is Liberation from Ignorance and Finding true Enlightenment. Deepak, thoughtfully, started analyzing the ignorance that we live with. He wanted to be liberated. He wanted to find true Enlightenment, and by now he believed his Master. He had overcome the ignorance. He realized that he was neither the body nor the mind but the Divine Soul. He had only one goal, to be Liberated from Ignorance and be Enlightened with the Truth.

We all want to lead a happy Life but we human beings fail to eradicate the Ignorance that we live in and thus suffer. We think that happiness is a place, we try to go to happiness. We think happiness is a person, we try to be with happiness. We think happiness is a product, we try to procure and achieve the product to be happy. But this is a myth. Deepak realized at the retreat in the monastery that happiness is within. He could experience bliss everywhere in the monastery. Though Life was so simple here, everyone was peaceful and happy. He read about the musk deer who all through its Life chases the fragrance of the musk, not realizing that the musk it is seeking is hidden inside its navel. In its ignorance, it goes round and round till it finally falls off the cliff and dies. Hunters then

tear open its navel and pull out the musk. We too live and die seeking the happiness that is within. Happiness is a state of being. Happiness is in the moment, in the Now. Instead, we shuttle from the past to the future in search of happiness and we lose the present moment of joy.

We human beings are very strange. We go for a holiday somewhere. Then instead of enjoying that place, and being in that moment of bliss, we hurry through our holiday and soon it is over. So is Life! We rush through Life trying to reach a destination. It is our ignorance that does not let us realize that the destination is death. We don't enjoy the journey called Life.

Deepak pondered over the various stages of ignorance that envelops man in darkness. He realized that while only 1% of the world is visually blind, 99% of the world is spiritually blind. What does a blind man say? He says that there is nothing. It is not because of the fact that there is nothing but his blindness causes his ignorance. Similarly, our spiritual blindness causes our eternal ignorance. We are like that little bird that comes to a mirror. It sees another bird and tries to kiss it. Then, it flaps its wings to romance with it. Finally, to get to the bird, it goes to the back of the mirror, only to see that there is no bird. It is heartbroken. It comes back to the front and is delighted to see the bird again. We human beings too, get delighted with mere reflections in this world. We don't realize that all this is not true, they are like an illusion, a mirage in the

desert. Carried away by these illusions, our ignorance makes us desire. Sometimes, we achieve, sometimes we fail. Our failures create disappointments and we become miserable. Even the things that we possess create suffering because we become attached to them. We think, "This is my house, my car, and my money." We are ignorant of the fact that nothing belongs to us. When we lose our possessions, we are heartbroken. Little do we realize that ultimately, nothing belongs to us. Even our relationships are an illusion. We believe that our parents, our life partner and children are forever ours. Don't we see that relationships too break, if not during the lifetime, they must break at death? When will we overcome our ignorance? Ignorance fills our Life with fear.

Deepak recalled how one day, Raj had his first heart attack when he had received a letter from the income tax department. He was in London and he got a call that there was a thick envelope that came by registered post. Raj knew for sure that it was the dreaded order confiscating all his property and wealth. Even before opening the envelope, without knowing what the letter said, he was admitted to the hospital. Only much later, when he was discharged and he returned, did Raj realize that the envelope was a routine matter and not the dreaded order that he had imagined.

We human beings constantly live in fear. 'FEAR' is False Expectations Appearing Real. Our mind constantly

creates fear and thus makes us live with worry and anxiety. This is our ignorance. We fear so many things, right from something big like the fear of death to something small like a cockroach or lizard. What can this tiny creature do? But still, we fear. This one negative emotion itself creates so much poison in our Life that it can wipe out our laughter and smile.

Our ignorance makes us go back to the past. There are hurts that are over, but we nurse them, we curse them and we rehearse them. The past is gone! Our ignorance makes us go back there. Nothing can be done to change the past.

'Chaitra's mother died. She loved her mother a lot. She could not accept the death of her mother. She kept recalling moments she spent with her mother. She wondered why her mother had got angry that day and she cried. It was all over. Nothing could change the past. But Chaitra was spoiling her present moment living in the past.' Deepak was reading this passage and contemplating how true this was, how foolishly we imprison ourselves with regrets and then become anxious and miserable.

Our ignorance makes us jump to the future. The future is not yet born. We know very well that tomorrow never comes. Only today is real. Not even today, just this moment. But our ignorance makes us lose the present moment of peace and joy and keeps on making us jump into the future. Can you go to New York or Hong Kong? You can! But can you go to

the future or the past? You can't.

Deepak continued reading stories about different people. 'Mohan had everything. He could live a peaceful and blissful Life. But something made him greedy and he wanted to have his wealth multiplied several times. He took all his money and invested it in different faraway countries. Then he struggled to manage the portfolios. From his computer screen, he could see that his wealth was growing, wealth that he could possibly enjoy at a future day when he would encash these investments. But he didn't realize he was losing his greatest treasure - the Present! He was foolishly transacting the present moment of joy for a future that did not exist.' Deepak realized that it is because of our ignorance that we jump to the past and the future.

We are also ignorant about money and wealth. Nothing belongs to us eventually, but our ignorance makes us waste our entire Life earning money that we finally leave behind. We live in fear, worry, stress, and anxiety to make money. We cheat people, customers, our team and the government for making money. Money even makes us fight with near and dear ones, but it is our ignorance that stops us from realizing that currency notes are just pieces of paper that will eventually be valued at nothing. Deepak realized that it would be impossible for people to overcome this ignorance related to wealth and possessions because they are so attached to money, to their

possessions and to their families.

Where did this ignorance come from, wondered Deepak? What caused the entire world to be so blindly ignorant? That evening he asked his Master, "Tell me, my source of knowledge and wisdom, where does this ignorance come from?" The Master smiled again, "This ignorance is a universal illusion. It is called Maya. It consists of 2 powers – first, the power to conceal the Truth, and second, the power to project a myth. Until we realize the Truth about Maya, we will continue to live with the illusion. The Truth will be hidden and we will only see the myth. We will live and die in ignorance."

The Master told Deepak of that villager who once went to the town and saw a movie for the first time in a big theatre. His friend asked him, "What do you see?" The villager replied, "I see horses." "And what do you see behind that?" he was asked. He answered, "I see elephants." "And what do you see beyond the horses and the elephants?" he was asked again. "Nothing", said the villager, "Just a blue sky with a lot of smoke." "No, no! See what is beyond and tell me," said his friend. The villager tried hard but could see nothing beyond. Just then the movie stopped for the intermission. "Now what do you see?" The villager replied, "I see a blank screen." The Master explained that we live in ignorance. The blank screen is the reality, but we are ignorant of it like the villager. We see all the projections on the screen. These are

not real. This is Maya, these are illusions, but due to a figment of our imagination, our ignorance makes us believe everything in this world is real.

We too are no better than the villager. We too get carried away by the illusions of this world. We think we are intelligent, and we know that the dream is only a dream. Suppose I dream that I have borrowed one million rupees from the bank. Now I am unable to repay the bank. The bank comes to me and informs me that the next day, they are going to sell my mortgaged property to recover the money. I am shivering in anxiety. I wake up the next morning only to realize that it was a dream. What do I do? Do I go to the bank for the proposed mortgage event or do I thank God that it was just a dream when I wake up? We human beings think that we are intelligent to know what a dream is and what is real. What we don't realize is what seems to be real in our waking state is no better than a dream. At death, don't we see that whatever belonged to us ceases to be ours? All our wonderful relationships snap as if it were just a dream. Still, due to our ignorance, we do not accept that even the waking state is an illusion. Deepak wondered, "When will we overcome this illusion?"

We human beings are truly ignorant. We are ignorant about everything. We are ignorant about life and death, about God and man, about heaven and hell. We don't know who we are and why we are here. Deepak realized that unless we overcome our ignorance, we can never be

liberated because we will never realize the truth. He now realized what it meant to be truly enlightened. It was all about overcoming ignorance.

That day in the meditation hall, the Master was speaking to a few seekers. He was drinking a cup of tea in an earthen cup and he asked the seekers, "What is this?" They said, "It is a cup." He then pointed out to the altar and asked, "What is this?" They replied, "It is a statue." There were some offerings kept in front of the table. "What is this?" he asked. They replied, "It is a plate." The Master explained, "We are all ignorant. We think it is a cup, a statue, and a plate. But in reality, it is all clay. If we remove the clay from these, there would be no cup, no statue, and no plate. These appear due to the clay. The clay is the cause, these are effects. Our ignorance makes us see only the effects that are visible, not the cause that is the reality." It was another lesson for Deepak – the law of cause and effect. He realized that we are all effects. The cause is the energy that creates us. When the life inside us, the Soul or Atman departs - we die, we become nothing!

That very morning, he had read about Wave-Particle Duality, how scientists were investigating the smallest particle of matter – not molecules or atoms, but beyond electrons, neutrons and protons, they were studying the smallest particle- quark, under a microscope. Suddenly, the particle disappeared. Of course, the scientists were aware of the principle of Einstein which said that energy

and mass are interchangeable. Energy can neither be created nor destroyed but can only be transformed from one form to another. As they pondered on the formula, the particle reappeared, and they coined the discovery as 'Wave-Particle Duality'. Deepak shook his head in disbelief. We think that the body we see is matter, but in reality, it is energy – trillions of energy particles that together appear to be a human being.

Our ignorance doesn't stop there. We believe that at death, we will go to heaven or hell, although we see the body becoming dust on the earth. Then, who goes to heaven or hell? Has anybody seen or been there? Still, we believe this out of our ignorance and we cause ignorance in our children, telling them about Santa Clause and a God with an elephant head.

God is not a statue, God is not a saint, God is a power that no human brain can paint. But our ignorance takes us to temples, churches, and mosques when in reality, God is within. While there is no harm for us to pray, we must understand what we say. Deepak smiled when he saw a poster page with a donkey. The cartoon read, "If we pray, but we don't understand what we say, then we don't pray. We just bray!"

This retreat in the mountains seemed to be wiping out all the ignorance that Deepak had collected over the years. Deepak had one more profound realization. We don't

have to do much to overcome ignorance. It is just like being in a dark room. The moment you switch on the light, the darkness disappears. The moment we realize the Truth, we are enlightened, and the ignorance vanishes. But there is a deeper problem – the ME, the Mind and Ego, keeps on creating ignorance, repeatedly, again and again. The seeker took this issue to his Master, "Tell me, O Master, how can I overcome my ignorance?" The Master said, "There is only one way. You must realize the Truth!"

"

What is it that stops our Quest?
What causes failure in our Spiritual test?
It is ignorance that projects the myth,
And steals our Liberation by hiding the Truth.

"

CHAPTER 5 IN A NUTSHELL

Ignorance stops us from Liberation

- The true meaning and purpose of Life is to be Liberated from Ignorance and be Enlightened after Realizing the Truth.
- To find true Enlightenment, we should thoughtfully analyze the ignorance that we live in.
- We rush through Life trying to reach a destination. It is our ignorance that does not let us realize that the destination is death. We don't enjoy the journey called Life.
- Our ignorance makes us desire. Sometimes, we achieve, sometimes we fail. Our failures create disappointments and we become miserable.
- Even the things that we possess create suffering because we become attached to them. We are ignorant that ultimately nothing will belong to us.
- We are ignorant about life and death, about God, about heaven and hell. We don't know who we are and why we are here and that God-energy is the cause and we are the mere effects.
- Due to our ignorance we believe that everything in this world is real. But the world is a cosmic illusion - Maya that conceals the truth and projects a myth.
- We need to overcome our ignorance and realize the Truth that we are neither the body nor the mind but the Divine Soul.

CHAPTER 6

REALIZING THE TRUTH

From the next day onwards, Deepak became busy with the subject of Self-Realization. He was obsessed from day one to achieve the goal. Being in the monastery for weeks now, he felt that he was very close to it. But his Master told him, "You have the knowledge Deepak, but you have not realized the Truth!" Deepak was perplexed. Some part of this spiritual jargon went over his head. He could not understand the difference between 'knowing' and 'realizing', but he trusted the Master completely. So, he got to work to find out the difference between knowing and realizing, "Although I know what is and what is not, what is stopping me from realizing the Truth?"

This seemed to be the biggest challenge and so he stayed close to his mentor, talking to him as often as possible. What did Deepak discover? He discovered that what he thought was his most important asset - his mind was in reality, his biggest enemy. It kept bombarding him with thoughts that made him sink into the illusion of the world. He discovered that his mind was like a monkey that kept jumping from thought to thought. It was like a popcorn machine, constantly producing thoughts. This was the cause of not just his fear, his worry, and his anxiety, but also of his confusion and inability to realize things instantly. "How should I kill my mind?" he asked his Master. The Master's answer was instantaneous, "With

the sharp sword of the intellect, discriminate every thought before it becomes a feeling and action." By now, Deepak knew many things - he knew that the mind was producing practically one thought every second. This was 50 thoughts a minute, which could lead to 50,000 thoughts a day. He cried out to his guide, "How can I discriminate every thought?" His advisor laughed. "By reducing the number of thoughts," he said. "Our first challenge is to slow down the mind, to reduce the MTR – Mental Thought Rate, and then discriminate every thought. Without discrimination, there can be no realization." Deepak was told that he had to tame ME, both the Mind and the Ego. If he didn't tame the ego, it would become passionate and attached to people and things. The way to realization was to be detached and dispassionate. Deepak seemed to understand that this needed a lot of self-discipline, of both body and mind. It needed a strong desire and passion for liberation. "Guide me, O Master, how can I make my knowledge realization?" he pleaded. "Keep on, Keeping on," came the answer. "Keep at it like a stone-cutter. Have you seen a stone cutter breaking a rock? He hammers the rock one time, nothing happens! 10 times, 50 times, with no sign of a crack. Suddenly, after many blows, the rock cracks into two and he knows it was not that blow that did it, but all that went before."

Deepak took all his learnings, just like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, and he sat and put them together. He knew that he was not the body that he wore, but rather the one who

wore the body. He realized that he could not find the mind! He was the very Life Energy, the power inside that was causing breath. Without that power, there would be death. He asked his Master, "Where does the power go when we die?" The Master was intelligent. From his pocket, he removed a balloon and blew air into it. Deepak asked, "Why are you blowing this balloon?" The Master bounced it a couple of times on Deepak's head and then, just as a magician would do, deflated the balloon. He then asked Deepak, "Can you give me back the air that was inside the balloon?" "Impossible!" retorted Deepak. "The air inside has merged with the air that is everywhere." "Exactly!" said the Master, "So does our Soul."

Deepak added this piece too as a piece in his jigsaw puzzle. He had only 10 days to go before he finished his retreat in the monastery. He was not willing to go back without realizing the Truth. That night he had a discussion with his Master on God and it seemed to be magical. His Master made him realize that God is a Power that is Omnipresent - present everywhere, Omnipotent – all-powerful and Omniscient – knows everything. "It is our ignorance," said the Master, "that we go to temples and other institutions in search of God. God lives within, in the temple of our heart. Even the Bible states – "The kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:20,21)" and the Quran says, "He is with you, wherever you are (Surah 57:4)." This is what Deepak had written in his book when he started the retreat – 'Neti Neti, Tat Tvam Asi – not this body, not this mind, you are

Divinity. God is within each one of us'. These words are from the ancient Vedas, the Upanishads. What a pity! Most religions advocate the same Truth but people remain ignorant.

As Deepak looked at his spiritual jigsaw puzzle, the picture was becoming clearer. The power that was inside us was none other than the power of the Divine. This human body is formed when two cells male and female become one. The two cells are nothing but energy. They become a zygote and then grow into an embryo and finally the body. But the source is energy. We are that God-energy. At death, our body remains on earth to be cremated or buried, but the real us is the energy that departs. When it leaves, there is no breath, there is death. We are that Life Energy that departs, not the body that is finally disposed of.

At death, one of the two things happens. If we are ignorant, and we live as ME – Mind and Ego, we are born again. But if we realize who we truly are, then we are liberated from the cycle of death and rebirth. What intrigued Deepak was that he had read about all this before. He even knew what it meant, but he had not realized the truth. Although all these pieces of information were known to him, his mind had always wandered, without putting the pieces together. But today seemed to be a special day.

The fog in Deepak's mind was beginning to clear. All his knowledge and his learnings were crystallizing into realization, just as water crystallizes into ice. His jigsaw puzzle seemed to have fallen into place. He experienced a moment of spiritual awakening, the 'Aha' moment, as he could see the entire picture. It was an intuitive exhilaration, a moment of spiritual bliss. He experienced a sense of deep peace and joy as he slipped into complete silence. He seemed to have realized the Truth.

"

How is it that we can realize the Truth?
We need to get to the bottom of the root.
Not just with knowledge, we need His Grace,
Only then can we see the Divine in every Face.

"

CHAPTER 6 IN A NUTSHELL

Realizing the Truth

- When the seekers of the Truth feel that they have realized the Truth, they should carefully examine its reality because there is a difference between 'knowing the truth' and 'realizing the Truth.'
- To make knowledge a realization, we should keep on trying like a stone-cutter who hammers a rock multiple times with no sign of a crack. Suddenly, after many blows, the rock cracks into two and he knows it was not this blow that did it, but all that went before.
- We should understand that our mind is our biggest enemy. It makes us sink into the illusion of the world. To control our mind we should use our intellect that will help discriminate every thought by reducing the MTR – Mental Thought Rate.
- We must realize that we are not the mind and ego but the Divine Soul. At death, the Soul inside us merges with the Universal Consciousness, just like the air inside a balloon, when deflated, merges with the air that is everywhere.
- If we are ignorant and live as ME – Mind and Ego, we are born again based on our past Karma. But if we realize who we truly are, then we are liberated from the cycle of death and rebirth.

CHAPTER 7

AFTER REALIZATION, WHAT?

The Master could see the light in Deepak's eyes. He was learned enough to know realization in a person. He knew that Deepak's spiritual journey had begun. There can be no greater joy for a Spiritual Master than when his disciple realizes the Truth and moves forward towards Liberation.

"Deepak," said the Master, "you have started your true Life journey. Now, it is for you to live like a king, not a beggar." Deepak did not understand. The Master narrated, "Long ago, there was a kingdom where the king died without a successor. It was customary that only one of royal blood could be nominated as the next king. The ministers went to the grandmother of the king who was very old and asked her for a solution. She said that the king's grandfather had a nephew who had fought and left when he was young. "Go and search for him," she said. "A few years ago, I heard he had become a beggar and was seen begging on the streets near a faraway market."

The ministers were excited and just as the grandmother had said, they found the royal blood begging near the city market in a nearby town. They went and told him that he has to be crowned king as he was royal blood. He was brought to the kingdom. The beggar's clothes, his begging bowl, and stick were carefully hidden in the king's

cupboard and he was dressed up in royal clothes as a king after being bathed and cleaned. For some time, he was kept undercover until he was trained to be king. Soon, with the help of a team of good ministers in the king's court, he was coronated and he became an efficient emperor.

One day, the king opened the cupboard and the begging bowl fell out. He felt like going and seeing how things were in that part of the world. He told his personal minister, in confidence, to arrange a carriage to secretly take him there the next morning. He was already wearing the king's silk shirt and pants, but the beggar's clothes easily fitted over the kingly attire to hide his identity. Having begged for so many years, it took him no time to behave like a beggar. The whole day, he went around and the shopkeepers and people in the market recognized him. "Where did you appear from suddenly?" they asked. "We thought you were dead as you had disappeared!" While they thought he was a beggar, not for a moment did the king think that he was a beggar. The silk that he wore within rubbed against his skin reminding him every moment that he was the king and not a beggar!"

Deepak had a glow on his face. He realized what the Master was telling him. It was time for him to live as the Divine Life energy that he truly was, not the ego, body or the mind that he earlier thought he was. That's what the Master meant when he said, "Live like the king, not the

beggar!" Deepak would never forget this story throughout his Life.

The realization was just the beginning. Deepak had to be liberated from ignorance. That was the true purpose of Life. Until his realization was complete and he overcame all the ignorance that blinded a common man, he would never be able to be truly liberated and to find Enlightenment. He bowed down to his Master in gratitude and said, "Master lead me onward and forward. What should I do after realizing the Truth?" The Master explained, "Every individual, who realizes the Truth, faces a war within. On one side, the ME, the Mind and Ego, attacks him and on the other side, HE – the Divine Energy, uses the intellect to slay the ignorance with a sword so that he can live as a realized Liberated Soul."

A truly Realized Soul doesn't suffer the pain of the body, misery of the mind or agony of the ego. One who has realized the truth knows that he is none of these. The body may experience physical pain, and the mind may wander, but he doesn't suffer for he has overcome the ignorance. He realizes his true identity. A Realized Soul eliminates fear from his Life. He doesn't shuttle from the past to the future. Neither does he rehearse the past that is gone, nor does he worry about the future not yet born. He lives moment by moment being conscious of the 'NOW' with peace, joy, and bliss. The Realized Soul realizes that this world is nothing more than a cosmic drama. The earth is a big stage and we are just actors. We come and we go. But having realized the Truth, he doesn't fall prey to whatever is happening in this Life drama. He

becomes an observer and enjoys the show that unfolds on earth. He knows he cannot escape from action as long as he is alive in a body-mind complex. He performs his actions as an instrument of the Divine, without any ego, and therefore, doesn't create any Karma of his own. He surrenders all his actions to the Divine as an offering. He lives with a steady intellect, with discrimination and dispassion, discipline and desiring only the Divine and Liberation.

Deepak realized all this would be his Life philosophy from now. He had to be conscious of his Mind and Ego, the ME, which he was actually not. If he became the ME, then his realization would dissolve, and his Liberation would become a distant dream. The Master told him, "Even after realizing the Truth and overcoming ignorance if one falls prey to the ignorance, then one can never be liberated from this world of suffering."

"You have to learn to live like a lotus, Deepak," said the Master. "How can I live like a lotus, Master?" asked Deepak. "Have you noticed a lotus in a dirty pond of water? The lotus blooms beautifully, despite all the dirt around it. So you too should try to live like the lotus. Be in the world but not of it. Do not sink in the dirty waters that are all around you. My blessings will always be with you," said the Master. Deepak acknowledged with gratitude and asked the Master another question, "Till when does this challenge continue?" "Beware Deepak," said the Master, "till your last breath, for you are not excused from the onslaught of the attractions of this world and the

distraction of your mind. Always be conscious of who you truly are and live in Divine union." "How do I do that?" asked Deepak. "Let us discuss that tomorrow," replied the Master.

Deepak had a sound sleep that night. He felt as light as a feather. He had no fear and he experienced a unique peace that he hadn't ever felt before. In fact, he slept so soundly that other seekers had to wake him up in the morning. "The Master is waiting for you," they said. Deepak hurriedly got ready and with a sheepish apology, reached the Master. The Master was smiling. He already knew the story. "You must now learn to live in yoga," said the Master. "Tell me, Sir, what exercises must I do?" asked Deepak. "Oh, Yoga is not physical or breathing exercise as understood by most of the world," said the Master. "Yoga means Yuj or Union with the Divine. Remember, Deepak, the journey of learning never ends. We must continue gaining wisdom, though we may have realized the Truth."

"Life, going forward must be lived in Union with the Divine. Just like a SIM card is connected to its network, a realized soul must always be in Divine Union. There are 4 ways to be in Divine Union: Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Gyana Yoga, Dhyana Yoga. One may be in Union with the Divine through the Yoga of Action or Karma Yoga. Our actions must not be that of the body, mind, and ego. Our actions must be as an instrument of the Divine, doing the Divine work. Just like a flute knows that it does not

produce any music, without the musician's efforts, we should surrender our actions knowing that we are nothing and it is the Divine that is acting through us."

"We must always start our day in silence, in introspection and contemplation. This is the Yoga of Meditation or Dhyana Yoga. Through the practice of silence, we are able to listen to the silent voice of the Divine. The Divine has his own way of communicating with us. We must be alert to hear it either through somebody speaking, a message that we receive, or a direct intuition that comes to our superconscious mind."

"We must not forget to be in Union through Devotion or Bhakti Yoga. Our love for the Divine is paramount for us to be ultimately liberated and to find true Enlightenment. Remember, your retreat is coming to an end, but you have not overcome your ignorance about Yoga," said the Master. "The Yoga of Learning or Gyana Yoga must continue until our last breath. After all, what do we know? We know nothing, we are nothing. This should be our humble attitude as we connect with the Divine."

Deepak closed his eyes in gratitude that he had met such a Divine Master, a Master who had himself realized the truth. "What would have happened to him if he had not met his spiritual guide?" he shuddered. Suddenly, he had discovered the true meaning of Life and was moving in the direction of his Ultimate Goal. Deepak had himself

considered Yoga to be physical exercises and breathing techniques. He recalled those days when he would get together with Raj and Manohar and they would practise Surya Namaskar with their Yoga teacher. While that was good exercise, it did very little to build a Divine connection.

Deepak absorbed the Master's Divine guidance with humility. He thought to himself, "What an ignoramus I am!" He even wondered how much more of ignorance he would have to overcome till he was fully Enlightened. Would he ever reach that point and be totally liberated from ignorance? Then his intellect made him smile and he told himself, "Accept, don't wonder. Replace hope with surrender," words that his Master often uttered in the retreat.

"

Realization is just the beginning, it's not the end,
Overcoming ignorance is just a bend.
Conscious about every moment of the Lord we must be,
Then we will be liberated from the Mind and Ego, ME.

"

CHAPTER 7 IN A NUTSHELL

After Realization, What?

- Even after realizing the Truth and overcoming ignorance if one falls prey to ignorance, then one can never be liberated from this world of suffering.
- The Realized Soul is conscious of his Mind and Ego, the ME, which he is actually not. If he becomes the ME, then his realization would dissolve and his Liberation would become a distant dream.
- A truly Realized Soul doesn't suffer the pain of the body, misery of the mind or agony of the ego. One who has realized the Truth knows that he is none of these.
- He doesn't shuttle from the past to the future. He lives moment by moment being conscious of the 'NOW' with peace, joy, and bliss.
- As the lotus blooms beautifully, despite all the dirt around it, so should live a Realized Soul. Be in the world but not of it.
- After realization, one must live in Union with the Divine by practising 4 ways of Yoga: the Yoga of Meditation, Devotion, Action, and Education.
- The Realized one should practise silence - the highest form of worship and work as an instrument of the Divine doing Divine work.
- A person who has realized the Truth should live Life in Divine Acceptance and Surrender.

CHAPTER 8

WHAT IS TRUE ENLIGHTENMENT?

On this journey called Life, we hear of these terms – Enlightenment, Salvation, 'Moksha', and 'Nirvana'. But what exactly are all these? Humanity just utters words but more often than not, we don't really understand what we say. Deepak reached out to his Master and asked him, "What is true Enlightenment?"

"Remember your friends?" asked the Master. "One of them was chasing success, money, and in that chase, he died. The second lived a good Life but he became miserable when he felt that the world was unfair. Why were your two friends unhappy? Would you react like them if Life's circumstances made you unhappy?" the Master questioned. Deepak replied, "I don't think so." "Why?" asked the Master. "Because I realize that everything unfolds as per our own Karma. I also realize that if we live with desire and passion, we are bound to be disappointed. I have realized that this world is just a drama. It's like a dream. It is not real." The Master smiled. He told Deepak, "It is because you have started on the Enlightenment journey. Your friends, Raj and Manohar, I hope I have not forgotten their names, were miserable because they were covered by a blanket of ignorance. They were not Enlightened with the understanding of the Divine Universal Laws. They were not blessed to meet a

Master who could explain what Life is all about. Life is a journey. Less than 1% of humanity is fortunate to go on a quest to find the true meaning of Life. Of that minority, less than one in hundred overcome the ignorance." "But how many people find true Enlightenment?" asked Deepak. The Master replied, less than "0.0001%." Deepak asked, "Does it mean that less than a few thousand people in this world achieve true Enlightenment?" The Master replied, "Maybe a few hundred or less." Deepak laughed, "Then, it is less than 0.00001%." The Master said, "True Enlightenment is not getting caught in numbers. How does it matter, Deepak? Once we overcome ignorance and we realize the Truth, nothing matters. People who don't understand, want to know. But people who know, don't want to understand." Deepak paused for a moment. Sometimes, he needed time to digest what his Master was saying. He would often write it down and read it a few times before actually understanding what it meant. His retreat in the monastery made him realize that man is so insignificant. We are not even a speck of this vast universe. The earth itself seems to be a tiny grain of sand on the beach of creation.

"When will I find true Enlightenment, Master?" The Master smiled. He said, "That is what Life is about. Life is being Liberated from Ignorance and Finding true Enlightenment. You have started the journey. You are blessed and fortunate that the Divine grace is upon you. You have realized the Truth. The journey is not over. The

journey has just begun." Deepak sighed, but smiled, and said, "It is an enjoyable journey, peaceful and blissful. I feel so fortunate that I met you and came on this retreat. My Life too would otherwise be a struggle, shuttling between misery and joy, being glad and sad in cycles."

"How then, Master, will I be able to talk to you, to ask you questions after this retreat is over? I am here for only 6 more days." The Master said, "Deepak you don't need to come and ask me questions. The energy within me is the same energy that is within you. You need to go within. Every day will be a new learning. Every day will be a day to renounce something that sucks us back into 'Maya', the illusion of the universe. Remember this, we are nothing. We are absolutely nothing. Until we realize this, we will not find True Enlightenment. The Divine is everything."

The Master knew that Deepak would move forward on this journey of True Enlightenment. He was a keen seeker, committed to living Life, realizing the Truth and being liberated from ignorance. "Before you go," he told Deepak, "Make a list of all the books that you have read and those that have helped you in your transformation in these 3 months. Give me that list tomorrow."

Deepak did not question why. He had learned not to ask unnecessary questions and to focus on what was relevant. He was thinking how time just flew by in the monastery and now it was time to go. He was lucky he had got so

much time with his Master. It was a rare gift. "How should I live my Life going forward, Master?" asked Deepak. "You must learn to live like a boat. The boat sails across a dirty river but does not sink in it. It needs the river to reach its destination. You too need the world, but be like the boat that floats above the desires and cravings of the ocean of 'Samsara'. Life will not be the same as it is in the monastery. You will be attacked by different kinds of thoughts, by circumstances, and by people. If you want your Life to be a Life of Enlightenment, then you will not fall prey to the temptations in this world. Desire is the root cause of our suffering. You must be careful to live a simple Life as you did in the monastery. Beware of three things that can stop you from true Enlightenment - Duty, Lust, and Shame."

"How can we not do our duty?" questioned Deepak. "Of course, we should do our duty but the biggest duty of our Life is to overcome ignorance. Duty comes in the guise of something that we cannot escape from. Duty can pull us into the world and lock us into a prison and we will be lost forever." Somehow, we human beings don't realize that we are 'human beings' and not 'human doings'. We keep on doing and most of the time, it is doing what we consider to be our duty. We forget, that we are 'human beings' – that we must be conscious of every moment that we live. Life is about being aware and being conscious about the illusion that envelops us in darkness. One such illusion is duty, in the guise of it being a responsibility towards our

parents, our family, our society, and even our God. It puts us on a roller coaster that zooms through Life and suddenly, on the screen of Life, we see – 'The End!' Our Life gets over 'doing' our so-called 'duty' . But we forget 'being' who we truly are, realizing the Truth and being liberated. Deepak contemplated, "What is our biggest duty?" He realized that the Master was right. It is our duty that can distract us from our path, taking us away from the Ultimate Goal of our Life.

"Lust is all kinds of desires, not just lust for flesh. It can be for wealth, wine, women or anything that makes you a slave. Our challenge is that we must always be in the driver's seat. Life is like a car and we must take control of it if we want to arrive at the destination we seek." Deepak listened carefully and replied, "I am surprised to hear this, Master. While I understand how lust can lure us away from our goal, I never believed that duty could hold us back from Liberation, but now I understand. Master, what about shame?" The Master replied, "Sometimes, in fear of shame, we do not do the right things. We continue to be ignorant because of shame. Then we become slaves. We are not free. Liberation is all about freedom. Unless we are totally free, we cannot be truly Liberated."

"You are amazing, Master!" exclaimed Deepak with delight. "I have not met anybody like you. You are truly Divine!" "We all are," said the Master. "It is just that we are all covered by layers of ignorance. We need to take off

these layers one by one until we see the clear picture. That is Enlightenment! There are 3 steps for this."

"The first step is Purification. Our Life has so many impurities – impure thoughts, habits, and beliefs. We need to purify our Life. We need to cleanse our Life like we would clean a dirty mirror. As long as there are layers of dust on the mirror, we cannot see a clear picture. One must go through this process of purification, removing all impurities and shine just as gold shines after it is purified."

"The moment we finish purification and we are sincere in our quest, there will be Illumination. This is the second step. We will see the light of Truth in everything. Whatever we talk or do, it will be backed by our illumination. Our intellect plays a key role in this second phase. It is in this phase that we realize the Truth that we are neither the body, nor the mind, nor the ego. We are the Divine Soul. When we live with purification and illumination without sinking in this world of illusions and if the grace of the Divine is upon us, then there will be Unification."

"What is Unification, Master?" asked Deepak. "You already know it, Deepak. It's just that you need to go onward, forward, upward, inward, Godward and then you will experience it. If we take two balloons, one red and one blue and fill them with air, both the balloons come alive. They were pieces of dead rubber but now they

bounce with Life. If we deflate these red and blue balloons, can we retrieve the air that was in these balloons separately?" "Impossible!" said Deepak. "The air that was in the balloons has merged with the air that is everywhere. So does our Soul," said the Master. "And what are we in reality, Deepak?" queried the Master. "We are the Soul," he said in reply. He continued, "Unification with the Divine is our Ultimate Goal. Realization is the beginning. Then we are liberated while being alive. Thereafter, we must live as a 'Jivan Mukta', a Liberated Soul. Finally, at death, we must be unified with the Divine, not be reborn as ME, Mind and Ego."

Deepak seemed to be lost in moments of silence. The Master was used to this. He could just remain silent as long as it was needed. "Master, please tell me one more time, the connection of God with our Life." The Master smiled and said, "God is everything. We are nothing." Deepak had realized this Truth but it was always such a joy to hear the Master explain it. So, he joyously listened as the Master explained, "From the very first moment that we are created, we are nothing but Divine Life Energy. The energy that is us, evolves from a zygote to an embryo and is finally born as a baby. We are still the same energy that we were. But the baby grows into an adult. Finally, one day, the body dies. But we don't. Even if we are ignorant, we will be reborn based on our Karma. When there is self-realization, that is when we overcome our ignorance and realize the Truth. Then there is Liberation, Liberation from

misery and sorrow. True Enlightenment is growing from self-realization to God-realization. Only when we realize God, there will be unification with the Divine." Deepak folded his hands and said, "Please continue Master, please explain in detail about God-realization."

The Master continued,"Everything in this universe is a manifestation of God. We must realize that we are the Divine Soul, the Life Energy. What is this Life Energy? Where does it come from? The energy in you and me is not different. It is the same. We saw how the air in the two balloons merged. Ultimately all our energies merge into the Universal Consciousness. In our house, there are so many lights and gadgets. But the source of power is one. So also, the source of power in this universe is that one Divine Power. We call this power God."

"The term 'God' has been grossly misunderstood. People make any saint into God. They don't understand who God is, what God is or where God is. But they just pray to God." At that moment, Deepak fell into a trance, an experience that he could never forget. He saw a man cut a portion of a tree trunk, decorate it with some flowers and colourful powders. He burnt a few incense sticks and started praying to the tree. Passers-by, seeing the man pray, made a line behind him. Then each one repeated the prayer that was being performed by the one in the line before them. None of them understood what this prayer meant. But it was just a ritual. Deepak himself stood in the line and

performed the ritual. Now he realized how foolish people are when it comes to God. No doubt God exists, but God is a power that cannot be defined. We follow our religion, which in reality, is just a kindergarten on the journey towards God. We need to evolve in spirituality, which is the true university for us to graduate in God-realization. He realized that on this spiritual journey, Life is about True Enlightenment. It is about God-realization, realizing the Truth about God.

"God cannot be defined. God defined is God denied. God is everything. We are nothing! We are just a tiny particle of God. We are just a tiny wave in the ocean. The wave comes from the ocean and goes back to it. We see it so clearly! But due to ignorance, we don't realize that we too come from the Divine and go back into the Divine."

"The Divine has created this world as a humongous cosmic drama. Billions of people come onto the earth stage. They do their part and they go. Nobody remains here forever. But all these people are nothing but manifestations of the Divine, just like you and me. Because of the body, mind, and ego we live in ignorance and we suffer. Self-realization must evolve to God-realization. That is true Enlightenment. If we want to achieve the Ultimate Goal of Life, we must continue the journey until we reach the end."

"Please Master," said Deepak, "share a secret through

which I can live with both self-realization and God Realization all the time." "The self you have already realized, Deepak. If you go and live like your friends, Raj and Manohar, then your Life is doomed. But if you want true peace, bliss and joy, then you will be conscious of who you truly are – the Divine Soul. To realize God, so that you are ultimately united at death, you must see God everywhere, in everything. Don't you know these beautiful flowers are beautiful because of God? The beautiful birds flying in the sky, the clouds, the stars – what are all these?" "These are beautiful creations of God," said Deepak. "No!" replied the Master. "Your mind has defeated your intellect. Beware! This can ruin your journey to true Enlightenment. If the God-power leaves the birds, and the flowers, what will happen? They will be dead. What would happen to all the beauty?"

"The beauty would disappear," replied Deepak. "Wow!" exclaimed Deepak. "So, beauty is Divinity." "Yes," said the Master. "If you realize God in everything beautiful then you have achieved God-realization. Everything in this world is God. But we see the outer appearance because of 'Maya', the cosmic illusion. For God-realization, we need to go beyond 'Maya'."

That night, Deepak did a lot of introspection. He made a lot of notes. It seemed that he had experienced the most profound day in the retreat. It was a feeling of flying in the clouds. The session on True Enlightenment and God-

realization elevated Deepak to a new pinnacle of ecstasy. It was his biggest and his True Spiritual moment of 'Aha!'

Deepak quickly noted down what he would ask the Master in the remaining 5 days. Why does everybody just want to be happy? What is the ultimate secret of bliss and peace? Can there be a Life without misery and pain? What is the Ultimate Goal of Life? In the last few days, he thought he would ask his Master more about all this before he went back into the world.

"

True Enlightenment is Realizing we are the Soul,
Not sinking in Maya, but achieving our Ultimate Goal,
Being Liberated from Ignorance, knowing we are Nothing,
And Living in Bliss, seeing God in Everything.

"

CHAPTER 8 IN A NUTSHELL

What is True Enlightenment?

- We are all covered by layers of ignorance. We need to take off these layers one by one until we see the clear picture. That is Enlightenment!
- A true Spiritual Master can explain what Life is all about. One must learn not to ask unnecessary questions and to focus on what is relevant on the quest of Realizing the Truth.
- We follow our religion, which in reality, is just a kindergarten. We need to evolve in spirituality, which is the true university for us to graduate in God-realization.
- We must learn to live like a boat which sails across a dirty river but does not sink in it. It needs the river to reach its destination. We too need the world, but we should be like the boat that floats above the desires and cravings of the ocean of 'Samsara'.
- Three things - Duty, Lust, and Shame can stop us from true Enlightenment and we should overcome these by being conscious about the illusion that envelops us in darkness.
- To attain Enlightenment, the first step is Purification from impure thoughts, habits, and beliefs. The second step is Illumination. If we are sincere on our quest, we will see the light of Truth in everything. The third step - Unification with the Divine is our Ultimate Goal.

CHAPTER 9

ISN'T LIFE ALL ABOUT BEING HAPPY?

Deepak woke up very early the next morning. He had mixed emotions as he knew that he had only 5 days left at the monastery. He was sad that he would no more enjoy the fresh air up in the mountain, the sunrise and the hot cup of tea that he started his day with. As he was sipping his tea, he thought to himself that it would be so exciting to go back and live in the world with his realizations. He had so much more to ask the Master but such little time. Today, he decided that he will discuss 'happiness' with his mentor. After all, these 3 months in the mountains should give him enough wisdom to make the world around him a happier place.

As soon as the morning meditation was over, he asked the Master, "Why is it that the whole world is seeking happiness? Why does the world believe that Life is all about being happy?" "Every man in the world," explained the Master, "seeks happiness. The whole world lives with the pleasure-pain principle. They seek pleasure, just as they run away from pain. Unfortunately, they think Life is all about happiness and nothing else. Most people are chasing pleasure. They want achievement and success because they believe success is happiness. Sadly, they are ignorant of the Truth. Instead of living Life seeking Liberation from ignorance, they continue to live with

ignorance, seeking happiness. There is no harm wishing to be happy, but man doesn't know how to be happy. He is caught in 'Maya', the illusion and is seeking temporary pleasures. He is caught in his greed and lives Life like a merry-go-round, passing pleasure and pain in circles. Sure, Life is all about being happy, but man doesn't evolve in this journey of happiness. He lives like a yoyo, going up and down, sometimes glad, sometimes sad. Who doesn't want to be happy, Deepak? You, me, everybody in this monastery and everybody on planet earth wants to be happy. But people don't know how to be happy. Happiness is a state of being. It belongs to the now. But people are not able to remain in the 'now'. They are jumping into events of their past Life and then, into the future."

The session came to an end and Deepak took his notebook and sat down to contemplate. He reflected on the Life of his friend Raj. Raj had everything he needed to be happy but he never remained in the present moment. He was always bragging about the achievements of his past. Deepak realized that Raj was never peaceful. His Life was so stressed. He then thought of Manohar and how Manohar used to be so peaceful, but after the death of his child, he had started living with the fear of the future. He was so uncertain about what would happen. He had become so hopeless, without any faith in the Divine. Why was it so? Deepak analyzed and realized that he found himself so peaceful here. He made a note. His mobile

phone was not buzzing every few minutes making him anxious with what people wanted to tell him. He had shut himself off from negative thoughts. As he pondered, he realized that in 3 months, he had not watched television or read the newspaper. Whatever essential news he got, came through his mobile from his near and dear ones. But wouldn't it be amazing if he could live without the mobile, the newspaper, and the television after going back to the world? He felt that it was heaven here. He wondered, "How did it happen that I found so much happiness here without all those pleasures that would normally make me happy?" For 3 months, he had not had any exotic food or drink. There was no shopping, no entertainment, but he was blissful and peaceful. "Why," he wondered, "is the whole world so unhappy even though everyone seeks to be happy? If Life was all about being happy, why do people remain unhappy?" He sat in silence waiting for answers to come. People were ignorant about Life, about who they were and what their purpose was. They were not content, and they lived greedy lives. Although they knew that nothing belonged to them eventually, they did not realize this Truth.

Deepak had realized the Truth, but why was it that everyone alive did not realize this? Then he thought to himself, "Even I was ignorant 3 months ago. I too suffered in this chase for happiness." His mind visualized this world to be a highway called achievement, with everybody zooming in their cars to destination happiness. "How foolish we

are!" Deepak thought, "There is no destination called happiness. The end is death. Because we are zooming, we don't even enjoy the journey called Life. Everybody is so worried about 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow', that 'today' takes a back seat. We exchange our today, with yesterdays and tomorrows that don't exist. But happiness belongs to today, not to the past and the future.Will I go back after 4 days and become another rat in this rat race called Life or will I continue to live a Life of bliss and peace? Will I be able to share my experiences of the last 3 months with my close circle?"

Deepak took his notebook and started writing a note on happiness. "Happiness is a state of being. We can choose to be happy or unhappy. Most of us think success is happiness. We keep chasing success and unfortunately, we lose our Life in stress, worry, and anxiety. By the time we realize it, Life is over. Money can give pleasure but not happiness. Happiness doesn't come from a product, a place or a person. Unfortunately, we think that we will be happy if we get a car or a particular item that we crave for. We live in this myth that we will be happy when we go to Switzerland or Antarctica. We will truly enjoy it if we are with our loved ones. This is not true. Happiness is within us. Like the musk deer, we are seeking for it outside. The deer goes round and round in circles, searching for the musk that is within. It finally falls off the cliff and dies. We too search for happiness, but our Life gets over in that search. We forget to be happy as we try to find happiness."

Deepak had read all these stories in the monastery. He thought of the story of an old lady who was searching for her diamond nose ring just outside her house. All her neighbours joined the search till finally one wise neighbour asked her where exactly she had dropped it and she said that she dropped it inside the house. "Then why are you searching for it outside?" asked the neighbour. She replied, "You don't understand! There is no light inside the house!" "We too are searching for happiness in the wrong place. Therefore, we never find it. We don't realize that happiness is like a shadow, the more we chase it, the further it goes away."Deepak kept writing effortlessly. The thoughts were just flowing to him as if they were Divine thoughts. As he was finishing his notes, he reflected upon all his friends and realized how they had all misunderstood happiness.

It was getting late in the night, but Deepak was still contemplative, thinking about Life and happiness. It was ok to talk to his Master about Liberation, Ignorance, and Enlightenment, but in the real world that he was going back into, people were talking of one thing - Happiness. They could relate it to success, achievement, money, wealth, name, fame, pleasure, contentment, fulfillment, joy, peace or even love. But where was all this leading to? He could read the answer as if it was written all across the sky – Happiness. The next day, he would somehow find the answer to the question, "What was the Ultimate Secret to Bliss and Peace?"

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Everyone alive wants Happiness,
A Life of Bliss without any Stress.
Sadly, we think Success is Happiness
And so thinking, make our Life a Mess!

"

CHAPTER 9 IN A NUTSHELL

Isn't Life all about Being Happy?

- The whole world believes that Life is all about being happy. Every man in the world seeks happiness. The whole world lives with the pleasure-pain principle. They seek pleasure, just as they run away from pain.
- Most people are chasing pleasure. Sadly, they are ignorant of the Truth. Instead of living Life seeking Liberation from ignorance, they continue to live with ignorance, seeking happiness.
- People are caught in 'Maya', the Cosmic Illusion and are seeking temporary pleasures. They are imprisoned by their greed and live Life like a merry-go-round, passing pleasure and pain in circles.
- Most people don't know how to be happy. Happiness is a state of being. It belongs to the now. But people are not able to remain in the 'now'. They are jumping into events of their past Life and then, into the future.
- Happiness doesn't come from a product, a place or a person. Happiness is a state of being. We can choose to be happy or unhappy.
- Most of us think success is happiness. We keep chasing success and unfortunately, we lose our Life in stress, worry, and anxiety. By the time we realize it, our Life is in a mess!

CHAPTER 10

HOW CAN WE ACHIEVE ULTIMATE BLISS AND PEACE?

"Good morning, Deepak," his Master greeted him. "Are you getting ready to return home?" "Not yet," said Deepak, "not till I learn everything from you!" "Me? I am nothing," said the Master. "You are my Master, my mentor, my guide," said Deepak. "Without you, I would not even start my realization journey. You have been so kind and patient, answering all my foolish questions and helping me overcome my ignorance." "We all pass through this phase, Deepak. I too felt the same when I used to ask my master questions. If we don't ask, if we don't investigate, we can never realize the Truth."

"Master, what is the ultimate secret of bliss and peace?" Deepak was very direct. He knew that the next 4 days will zoom by. Minutes were passing like seconds and he wished time could be still. "Happiness has 3 peaks. Most of the world, about 80%, is trying to climb the first peak of happiness. We go up and up, but we never reach the peak. This is because the first peak is an illusion. It doesn't exist. People on the journey to the first happiness peak are never truly happy. First, their Life is riddled with problems and fear, worry, and anxiety envelop them. So, joy and sorrow come to them like day and night. They are consecutively happy and unhappy, both in cycles. The moment they achieve one thing, they seek another. What they don't

realize is that their original state is a state of peace and bliss. They create desires and dreams. They set goals and all this creates ripples in their Life. Stress and anxiety attack them until they ultimately attain their goal. Then they achieve success and happiness. What they don't realize is that this joy and bliss already existed. What was missing was the excitement. Many a time, people don't achieve their goals. The ripples of worry and the tensions only increase. But somehow, man is ignorant. He continues to live this way, without discovering that peace is the foundation of happiness. Very few people are blessed to take an exit on the highway called Achievement. They are the lucky ones who start a journey to the second peak called Fulfillment. Actually, this is not a peak. It is a plateau where one is content, peaceful, and blissful. One has overcome the ignorance and got out of the chase to win the race."

"Those who want to discover the ultimate secret of happiness must overcome living with greed. They must be satisfied, fulfilling their need. Not only must they live with peace, the foundation of happiness, they must also live with true love. True love is a fountain of joy, but most people don't know what love is about. We live thinking that love is about hugs, kisses and Valentine's Day. We misunderstand love as romance and sex. But True Love is very Divine. True Love is White Divine Love. Just like a rainbow appears as a blend of 7 different colours, True Love manifests in a human being at every step of human

existence. And just like the rainbow is nothing but the Divinity of the Sun shining through droplets of rain, splitting into a magnificent array of colours, True Love also manifests in 7 colours and evolves as we grow. The fountain of love sprinkles love, joy, bliss, and peace on everybody we meet. Love can be for our parents, our siblings, our friends or our sweetheart. In reality, though, true love is from one Soul to another Soul. It is the Divinity within us that is loving the Divinity in another. But as long as we do not eradicate the ignorance that we live with, we will never discover the fountain of True Love just as we will miss the ultimate secret of bliss and peace."

"Master," questioned Deepak, "you said that the first peak is Achievement. It is happiness that comes from pleasure. You also mentioned that the second peak is Fulfilment. It is a plateau where there is contentment, peace, and love. But what is the third peak? Is that the ultimate peak?"

"Let us discuss that tomorrow," said the Master. "No Master, I can't sleep without you revealing the secret." By now the Master knew that Deepak never insisted but when he was persistent, he would not give in. "The third peak is Enlightenment," said the Master. "Enlightenment is the ultimate peak where one enjoys eternal joy and everlasting peace. One reaches the third peak when one is liberated from all ignorance. One transcends achievement and lives with contentment and fulfillment. At this point, one still suffers. One experiences misery, pain, and

suffering till one transcends and evolves to the third and ultimate peak, the peak called Enlightenment that is reached when we are liberated from ignorance. It is on this peak, that one not only lives with eternal joy and peace, but is also free from misery and sorrow. But remember, this is only possible for those who pass through Self-Realization, those who realize the true self and are thereby, liberated from ignorance. They are the ones who find true Enlightenment on the third and ultimate peak."

"Are you telling me, Master, that people on the third peak live a Life without misery and pain?" The Master smiled and said, "To be continued tomorrow."

"

How can we achieve Ultimate Peace and Bliss?
How can we have Everlasting Happiness?
If we overcome all our Ignorance,
Joy and bliss will replace Fear and Stress!

"

CHAPTER 10 IN A NUTSHELL

How can we achieve Ultimate Bliss and Peace?

- There are 3 peaks of happiness. About 80% of humanity is trying to climb the first peak of happiness, Achievement. However, this peak is an illusion.
- People on the journey to the first peak are never truly happy. Their Life is riddled with stress, anxiety, and disappointment. They experience joy and sorrow in cycles.
- Few people take an exit on the highway called Achievement. They are the lucky ones who start a journey to the second peak called Fulfillment. Actually this is not a peak. It is a plateau. Here one is content, peaceful and blissful, but one still suffers.
- Those who want to discover the ultimate secret of happiness, must overcome greed. They must be satisfied, fulfilling their need. Not only must they live with peace, the foundation of happiness, they must also live with true love. True love is a fountain of joy, it is Divine.
- Enlightenment is the ultimate peak where one enjoys eternal joy and everlasting peace. One reaches the third peak when one is liberated from all ignorance.
- This is only possible for those who pass through Self-Realization, those who realize the true self and are thereby, liberated from ignorance, misery, and sorrow.

CHAPTER 11

CAN THERE BE A LIFE WITHOUT MISERY AND SUFFERING?

Deepak could not sleep that night. The master had revealed the secret that there was a peak, the third peak of happiness, Enlightenment, where there was no misery and pain. Nowhere had Deepak read that such a peak existed. He was too excited to sleep. He didn't know when he fell asleep.

The next morning, he did not have to ask the Master the question. The Master remembered. On meeting Deepak, he said, "Can there be a Life without misery and pain?" Deepak smiled. He said, "I believe so, but I would like you to explain it to me. In the last few weeks, I have not experienced any misery, any pain and I wonder when I go back, will suffering attack me?"

"Who suffers?" asked the Master, "The body suffers all kinds of physical pain. But we are not the body, are we, Deepak? We may live in the body, but we don't have to suffer the pain of the body. We may be impacted by that pain, but if the realization has dawned upon us that the body is just an outer covering, then we do not suffer. It is like driving in a car. The car has an accident. It is damaged badly. We are inside the car but we are safe. We don't need to suffer the accident, but many people will scream and cry

just because they experienced a crash. The moment we realize that we are not the body, all pain of the physical body gets detached from our experience. This does not mean that we will not feel any pain, but though we feel the pain, we need not suffer."

The Master continued, "It is more so with the mind. Before being Enlightened with the Truth, we human beings go through all kinds of mental misery. We live with fear. Who fears? It is the mind, not us. But if we have not realized the Truth, then we live with fear. The Enlightened ones know that our fears are not our real dangers. We suffer so much misery needlessly because of our ignorance. But once we realize the Truth, we brush away our fears with courage and confidence. We use the intellect to discriminate that the fear is not real. Even if it is a real danger, it is part of the cosmic drama that is unfolding on earth. Realized ones do not suffer fear."

"So is it with worry and anxiety. These create so much stress that it can result in not just mental disorders, but it can also affect our physical state of being. Such is the suffering that an ignorant man causes on himself. Once we are Enlightened with the Truth, there is nothing to worry or be anxious about. Whatever will be will be! Those who realize the Truth, live with Divine acceptance and surrender. Thus, they truly enjoy the show."

Why do we human beings become jealous, take revenge,

and even hate people? All these emotions arise due to ignorance. They generate thoughts which become feelings and finally actions. Later we may regret, but we impulsively live with these negative emotions and habits. All this makes us miserable. When we are enlightened, the light of wisdom eradicates the darkness of ignorance and slowly but steadily, all these negative emotions that create poison in our Life, disappear, letting us remain in peace and tranquillity.

Deepak thought of Karishma. She had everything that could make her happy. But her Life was full of envy and jealousy. Everybody in the office knew that though she was so talented, she had lost all opportunities of being the most successful and happiest person because of her rascal mind. Her mind created so many jealous thoughts that she was constantly thinking about the achievements of others rather than her own. Instead of using her creative energy to improve her performance, her mind was constantly thinking and plotting humiliation for her colleagues. She was finally caught in acts of shame that ended her success journey. Deepak pondered on her foolishness. What an amazing Life she would have lived if she had been Enlightened by the Truth. But she lost everything and her Life ended with all the possible misery, shame, and suffering one can imagine.

Deepak was listening eagerly. He not only understood but realized what the Master was saying. He shared with the

Master that Raj was so rich but he used to suffer a lot because of his anger. His whole body used to shake whenever he burst into flames of anger, shrieking and screaming. "That is the ego," said the Master. "Our ignorance makes us suffer the agony of the ego. The ego desires something and if its expectations are not fulfilled, the ego gets upset and angry. In its agony, it burns the body and the mind with anger. We all suffer the misery of the mind and agony of the ego but this can be avoided by overcoming the ignorance we live with."

"The moment we realize that we are the Divine soul, not the ME – Mind and Ego, then most of our sufferings come to an end. We may experience a little pain in the body, but we can overcome that suffering. Most of our misery and suffering can be wiped out with True Enlightenment."

"It is so foolish to live with hate, jealousy, revenge, fear, stress, anger, and anxiety. But we human beings are slaves to these messengers of misery. They bring to us misery and we foolishly accept it. If we know how to truly live Life, then we can be liberated from ignorance and live a Life without misery and suffering."

Deepak heaved a sigh of relief. He was now sure that he would not let his mind or ego make him suffer. He felt like he was leaving the ME – Mind and Ego up in the mountains, before returning to his world. He seemed to be like a liberated and free soul, happy and peaceful,

Enlightened with the Truth. Because there were just 2 days left, he thanked the Master with humble gratitude and asked, "Master, tomorrow is my penultimate day here. Will you share with me, what is the ultimate goal of our Life?" The Master smiled and said, "You already know it." "Before I go," Deepak said, "I would like to make certain notes." The Master said, "Deepak, notes may be important, but what you etch out in your heart and Soul will become your Life-philosophy. You have done well in the last 3 months. We will discuss the goal of Life tomorrow."

"

Is it possible to eradicate Misery and Suffering?
Can we live a Life that's Peaceful and Exciting?
Yes, if we live transcending Ego, Body, and Mind,
Then fear, worry, and anxiety, we will leave behind.

"

CHAPTER 11 IN A NUTSHELL

Can there be a Life without Misery and Suffering?

- We can escape from all misery and suffering if we realize the truth of who we are. The body suffers but we are not the body. We may experience pain, but we don't have to suffer.
- Similarly, before being Enlightened with the Truth, we human beings go through all kinds of mental misery like fear, anxiety, jealousy, vengeance. The mind experiences all these negative emotions, but we are not the mind.
- All these emotions arise due to ignorance. They generate thoughts, which become feelings and finally actions, creating misery.
- When we are enlightened, the light of wisdom eradicates the darkness of ignorance from our Life. Because of this, all these negative emotions that create poison in our Life, disappear, letting us remain in peace and tranquillity.
- Our ignorance also makes us suffer the agony of the ego. The ego desires something and if its expectations are not fulfilled, the ego gets upset and angry. In its agony, it burns the body and the mind with anger.
- We all suffer the misery of the mind and agony of the ego but this can be avoided by overcoming the ignorance that we live with.
- The moment we realize we are the Divine Soul, not the ME – Mind and Ego, then most of our sufferings come to an end.

CHAPTER 12

WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF LIFE?

"This box is for you," the Master said, as soon as Deepak greeted him on his second last day at the monastery. "What is this?" asked Deepak, peeping into the partly opened box. "Oh my God!" he exclaimed, " These are the books that I have been reading over the last 3 months. What a treasure this is. It is priceless! Thank you, Master."

"The wisdom you have gained from these books is what forms the Ultimate Goal of our Life. We don't realize what that is, do we? We squander our Life in meaningless pursuits, not realizing that the Ultimate Goal is Enlightenment, True Enlightenment that comes from Liberation. Most people have different dreams and goals. Some want to become champions in sports or art. Some want to be millionaires and billionaires. But ultimately, their goal is to be happy. Despite winning the championship or having money in the bank, if these people are still unhappy, then they haven't achieved their goal."

"There are very few people in Life who realize that the Ultimate Goal is to realize that we are the Soul. The Goal of our Life is to escape from misery and suffering and live a Life of peace and bliss."

"Of course, there are many people in this world who just exist. They don't even have a goal. They are no better than this table and chair that will lie here till they are moved away. Far better than to just exist is to be an achiever. But that is still not our Ultimate Goal."

"Why then, Master," asked Deepak, "is the whole world chasing monetary goals? Why are people so crazy about success and achievement?" "Sad," said the Master, "it is because they are ignorant. They spend their entire Life zooming down the wrong highway and then Life is over. You see, you can't get more of Life. You can't get more minutes in an hour, more hours in a day, more days in the year, and more years in your Life. But this entire Life is made up of moments. Moment by moment, Life is consumed and if we don't achieve our Ultimate Goal, then our Life is a waste."

Deepak had observed so much in these 3 months. He reflected upon his own Life and the lives that his friends lived. His thoughts went back to Raj, what a dynamic man he was! But he died without achieving the Ultimate Goal. He did not attain Enlightenment. Komal and Manohar were such lovely people. Then why did they suffer? Because they too were not Enlightened with the true meaning of Life. Deepak thought, "I don't want to waste my Life anymore." He was very clear. He wanted to achieve true Enlightenment. However long he lived, he wanted to live as the Divine soul, not suffer as ME – the Mind and Ego.

Suddenly, a deep sense of peace swept over Deepak. He deeply gazed into the Master's eyes and remained still, in silence. He seemed to be in a state of enchanting bliss, a kind of bliss he had never experienced before. As the Master left, Deepak did not want to lose the last moments in the monastery sleeping. He opened the box of books and started looking through the books one by one. These were his books now and so he took a pen and started jotting down important notes on the books which he could reflect on later.

Tattva Bodha

Deepak glanced through the book again. It made him realize what the body is made of. He realized that the living body is composed of two main forms - the gross body and the subtle body. The gross body, Sthula Kaya is composed of five essential elements- the Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and the Sky while the subtle body, Sukshma Kaya consists of the Mind, Ego, Intellect, and Memory.

Atma Bodha

Deepak, while reading the book realized that we are the Atman, the Divine Soul, not the body that we seem to be. Bodha means Knowledge and Atman means Soul. Therefore, Atma Bodha means Self-knowledge. We can escape the miseries, sufferings, and pains that we experience during the journey of our Life if we understand

that this world is nothing but Maya, a Cosmic Illusion and we are neither this body nor this mind nor ego. We are the Divine Life Energy whose ultimate goal is to seek liberation and to unite with the Divine.

Saddarsana

Deepak picked the book Saddarsana because it explains the vision of the Truth. Most of us are spiritually blind and we do not realize the Truth. The book explains that we are the Power, the Power that is responsible for all existence. It contemplates the fact that there must be a Creator for the world and for us to exist. When we realize the Truth, everything disappears except the Divine. Everything is transitory. The reality of the self is pure consciousness, not the body or mind that we think ourselves to be. If we want the vision of the Truth, we must transcend the ego.

Upadesa Sara

This was an amazing book and Deepak was very excited that it was a part of his treasure. It explained the path of action - Karma Yoga, the path of devotion - Bhakti Yoga, the path of knowledge, Gyana Yoga, and the path of the Eightfold Yoga - Astanga Yoga, also referred to as Raja Yoga or Dhyana Yoga. Deepak realized that one could not achieve the Ultimate Goal of Life without being in Yoga, or Divine Union. It was only possible to live a Life following these four paths and this book explained this the best. It

made Deepak ponder on one very important truth, "Man is in command of his actions but he is not in command of the results thereof." There is a factor beyond man, the 4th Factor that makes the results possible. This was an amazing realization for Deepak.

Drg Drsya Viveka

In essence, this book made Deepak realize that we are not the "Eye" that can see, we are not the "I" that says, "It is me." It helped him find out who the true "I" is - that is us. Basically, it explains the difference between the one who is seeing and the one that is being seen. It made Deepak realize that the object may be an apple. The eye sees the object. The mind sees the eye, but the real seer is the one who is watching the mind. With interesting examples, it made Deepak realize who is the real one that is conscious.

These books were not easy to comprehend and needed repeated reading to absorb the concepts explained. Due to Maya or illusion, we are unable to go deep in inquiry and realize the cause of everything. Deepak was excited that he had this treasure with him.

Vivekachudamani

Another amazing book by Shankara and in fact, one of the most important classics, is Vivekachudamani. 'Vivek' means intellect and the Acharya talks of how 'Vivek' is our

most important treasure. If we want to evolve on a spiritual plane, then we must use our intellect to live a Life of detachment from the illusion of Samsara. We must realize the true self. First, we must realize 'Neti Neti', what we are not, and then go on to 'Tat Tvam Asi', Thou Art That. This will liberate us from all Karma and lead to the union with the Divine.

Aparokshanubhuti

This is one of the best-known works of Adi Shankaracharya. It talks of how the Truth is realized through direct or intuitive experience, although it is based on knowledge. Everybody who attains knowledge cannot realize the Truth. One must live with dispassion, discrimination, discipline and desire for liberation. Only then can one overcome ignorance and realize the truth. With Aparokshanubhuti, one can experience Divinity everywhere and see everything and everybody as a manifestation of the Divine.

Bhagavad Gita

In the box, Deepak also found a copy of the Bhagvad Gita. The world knows so much about the Gita that Deepak knew that this was another treasure. He kept it along with another Gita, the Ashtavakra Gita which he wanted to read further. He kept these books separately.

Who am I?

This little book by Ramna Maharshi focuses on just one question, "Who am I?" Based on the principal statements of the Upanishads, it is a concentrated dose of information for a serious seeker of liberation. The saint focuses on silence and transcending the mind with a complete focus on this single question, "Who am I?"

Vedanta – Voice of Freedom

This book is based on a lecture by Swami Vivekananda. This book on Vedanta created great clarity for Deepak in his realization about what Moksha is and how important yoga is. The most exciting part in the book was Swami Vivekananda's personal reaction when Sri Ramakrishna told him that everything is God - You are God, I am God. Although Sri Ramakrishna went on to become his future Guru, Vivekananda, at that time, thought the statement to be absurd. He thought that the sages who wrote such things were insane. The book narrates very interesting stories and focuses on the importance of yoga.

Scientist's Search for Truth

At first, Deepak wondered what a scientist's search for the truth had to do with spirituality, but this book with $E=MC^2$ on the cover became Deepak's favourite. Written by Swami Virajeshwara, a Ph.D. from the USA, this book

intrigued Deepak. He wondered how the young scientist renounced everything to go in search of the Truth, to find out, "Who am I?" and "Who is God?" The book made Deepak connect spirituality to science and realize that in reality, both science and spirituality believe that everything is energy. The book made Deepak realize that we are nothing, but the Divine Energy. Everything is energy. There is nothing other than energy.

The Question of Freedom

Deepak pondered on many things and one of these was Freedom, our Ultimate Goal, the realization of the Truth. The last chapter of this book caught his attention. What amazed him was how Swami Chinmayananda explained that we can be liberated from all action. It made one realize that we are nothing but the Divine Instrument and not the ego, mind, and body that we think ourselves to be. This small book was also one of Deepak's favourites.

Yoga Vasishta Sara

This little book attributed to Valmiki, the author of Ramayana, is a dialogue between Sage Vasishtha and Shree Ram. In essence, it inspires us to be a Jivanmukta, a Liberated Soul and be a mere spectator. It talks about the unreality of the world - that it is Maya or illusion. A liberated person realizes the Truth that our Life is nothing more than a dream. Both, our Life and a dream, are unreal.

It warns us about the mind and how we must conquer it through self-inquiry. One must give up all desires and achieve a state of purification, which ultimately leads to liberation. Only then can one attain a state of Nirvana or Supreme Bliss.

The Science & Philosophy of Religion

This book by Swami Vivekananda says, "God exists!" It is because of God that the universe appears. This excerpt from Swami Vivekananda's complete works, was an amazing text. What inspired Deepak the most was that it asked us to question everything. "Man becomes like an animal if he lives without inquiry not using his gift of intellect." The book talks about many concepts with the focus on Advaita or Non-Duality. Everything is one, though it appears different. We are all a manifestation of the Divine.

Spirituality in Daily Life

This book by Dada J. P. Vaswani was also one of Deepak's favourites. In fact, it remained at his bedside throughout his 3 months at the monastery. The simple and practical book gave him many simple triggers to evolve on a spiritual journey. One such trigger was to spend time in silence; another, to live with an attitude of gratitude. Deepak was very excited to receive this book.

Upanishads

Deepak found a bunch of books about the Upanishads. But one interesting book that covered all that the Upanishads, summarised the Mahavakyas, caught his attention. The book emphasizes the need to understand and realize the Truth if we want to attain Liberation or Nirvana. We need to understand the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads that carry the four principal messages of the Vedas.

1. **Tat Tvam Asi** - "Thou art That," – you are not this body or this mind. You are That- the Divine Soul.

2. **Ayam Atma Brahma** - This Soul is God. Since we are not the body, nor are we the mind, what are we? We are the Soul. The Soul is nothing but a manifestation of the Divine.

3. **Prajnanam Brahma** – Everything on earth is a manifestation of God. My Soul is Divine, your Soul is Divine, there is Divinity everywhere, in everything.

4. **Aham Brahma Asmi** - "I am the Divine." Since I am not the ego, the mind, the body, then I am nothing other than the Soul, I am Divinity itself. I am nothing but a manifestation of the Divine.

These four principal statements of the Upanishads are the essence of the Vedas, the crux of the 5000-year-old original

Hindu faith or Sanatana Dharma. They summarise the entire belief of our Life purpose. We are not this mortal body, nor are we the mind, we are the Soul which is the manifestation of the Divine. Some people misunderstand the statement to be full of arrogance and ego when they literally translate it to, “I am God,” The humble ones realize that the teachings here infer, “I am nothing. I am a manifestation of the Divine. God is everything. God is everywhere.” It is these four statements that can make one ultimately realize that at the death of the body, the Soul must be liberated to unite with the Divine.

Mandukya Upanishad

Amongst all these books, Deepak also saw a copy of the Mandukya Upanishad. The book focuses on the three states of human consciousness and the realization of the fourth Chaturiyam or Turiyam.

Kathopanishad

This was one of Deepak’s most cherished books and he read it several times. The book narrates the story of Nachiketa and his conversation with Yama, the Lord of Death and how he refuses all the material pleasures offered to him and insists on the boon of realizing the secret of what lies beyond death. This became one of Deepak's main treasures for the realization of the Truth.

This box of books was not just a library. It was a treasure for Deepak. A treasure from which he realized the truth about Life. 'What is Life?' Deepak wrote in his notes and as if from nowhere, the word 'Life' appeared as LIBERATION from IGNORANCE and FINDING true ENLIGHTENMENT.

"

What is our Life's Ultimate Goal?
Not just to realize we are the Divine Soul,
But to be Liberated from Ignorance and to Find,
True Enlightenment and Bliss of a Different Kind.

"

CHAPTER 12 IN A NUTSHELL

What is the Ultimate Goal of Life?

- Most of us don't realize what the Ultimate Goal of Life is. We squander our Life in meaningless pursuits, not realizing that the Ultimate Goal is Enlightenment, True Enlightenment that comes from Liberation.

- Most people have different dreams and goals. Some want to become champions in sports, others want to be millionaires and billionaires. But ultimately, their goal is to be happy.

- Despite winning the championship or having money in the bank, if these people are still unhappy, then they haven't achieved their goal.

- There are very few people in Life who realize that the Ultimate Goal is to realize that we are the Soul. The Goal of our Life is to escape from misery and suffering and live a Life of peace and bliss.

- People chase wrong things like success and wealth out of ignorance. Soon, Life is over.

- We can't get more of Life. We can't get more minutes in an hour, more hours in a day, more days in the year, and more years in our Life. Our entire Life is made up of moments. Moment by moment, Life is consumed and if we don't achieve our Ultimate Goal, then our Life is a waste.

CHAPTER 13

LIFE IS LIBERATION FROM IGNORANCE AND FINDING TRUE ENLIGHTENMENT

It was dawn and the chirping of the birds made Deepak open his eyes. From far, he saw the rays of the sun lighting up the sky very gently. Most others seemed asleep, so he tiptoed out to have his last cup of tea at sunrise, in the monastery. That evening, he would leave the monastery and go back into the world. He had been here for 3 fulfilling months but they seemed to impact Deepak more than the 30 years he had lived as an adult. His experience at the monastery touched his Soul as it transformed his heart. This morning, there was only one thing that kept playing on Deepak's mind – what is Life? – It is Liberation from Ignorance and Finding true Enlightenment.

Deepak's thoughts went to the bliss and the peace his Master lived with. He wished and prayed that morning that his Life too be so filled with Divine peace and bliss that he would know no suffering, just like his Master. Would that be possible?

That morning, the Master shared with them several Life instances. He spoke of Vivekananda and how he achieved Enlightenment. He also spoke of Ramana Maharishi, a saint who hardly spoke, but through his Divine silence was able to awaken people to the question, "Naan Yaar?"

or "Who am I?". The Master mentioned Adi Shankara and his passion to pursue the spiritual path. One day, when Adi Shankara was just an 8 year old boy and he was taking a bath in a river, a crocodile grabbed him by his feet. He cried out for help and his mother heard him cry. All along, the young Shankara had requested his mother to let him be a sanyasi or renunciate but she was not willing to even hear of it. Just when he was going to be killed by the crocodile, he begged his mother, "Please let me die a Sanyasi, if you did not let me live as one." Looking at his state, his sad mother reluctantly agreed. Shankara, in his ecstasy, started chanting mantras, spiritual hymns and as if by magic, the crocodile let go of him. He then dedicated his Life to helping people be Liberated and to find Enlightenment. He was an Enlightened Soul who has shown the path to thousands of seekers. His books, his bhajans and his teachings, impact genuine seekers to be liberated.

Deepak was in no mood to ask any questions on the last day. But as always, he enjoyed every moment that he spent with his Master, listening to what he said. Whenever possible, he used to note down the Master's words. By now, he had so many notebooks, that he had filled over the last 3 months in the monastery. After the morning session, he opened another notebook and he started writing.

"Life is all about Liberation. It is Liberation from Ignorance. We all live in ignorance and thus we suffer.

There is a way to overcome suffering. Suffering can be overcome by the realization of the Truth. We can realize the Truth, when we discriminate between the Truth and the myth. Discrimination is possible by using the intellect. The intellect is normally enslaved by the mind. The mind is our biggest enemy. It bombards us with thoughts and creates fear, worry, stress, and anxiety. Along with the ego, it makes us suffer. We have to transcend both ego and mind if we want to live by the intellect. For this, we need discipline, not just discipline of the body, but also discipline of the mind. We must live with dispassion and detachment, knowing that nothing belongs to us. Everything that is ours will soon cease to be ours. The one and only thing that will remain ours is our relationship with the Divine. We must seek the Divine and Liberation and nothing else. It is the constant seeking and desiring of worldly pleasures that creates disappointments and unhappiness. There is a way to overcome all misery and sorrow if we realize that we are not the ME, the Mind and Ego that craves. We are the Divine Soul!"

Deepak's pen flowed as if it was controlled by a Divine force. He was not thinking with his mind and writing. Words were just filling the pages and he went on and on. "This world is not real. It is 'Maya', an illusion. It is a Divine drama of the Creator. It is his 'Leela'. Everything is a manifestation of the Divine. That is why the world is so beautiful. It is because of our ignorance that we see the beauty but we do not see the Divinity. We think we have a

beautiful ring, a beautiful necklace, and a beautiful bangle. But in reality, it is not a ring, necklace, or a bangle. These are just effects and exist because of gold. Gold is the cause. If you remove the gold, there will be no ring, necklace or bangle. So is it with this world. Whatever appears may appear to be, but in reality, it is the Divine. When the Divine departs, there is nothing left. In a beautiful human being, a plant, a fish or a bird, death happens when the Divine departs. Then there is no Life left. Soon the beauty vanishes because the beauty belongs to the Divinity. We human beings are spiritually blind. We are unable to see the Truth, the Divinity in beauty."

Deepak's pen refused to stop. It seemed to go on and on. It was time to meet his Master for the final session. He had packed up all his belongings and was meeting his Master for the last time during that retreat. The Master's eyes wore a deep sense of satisfaction. They seemed to express the joy the Master experienced in seeing Deepak evolve over the 3 months. Not everybody is lucky to go through a metamorphosis in less than a hundred days. Deepak was blessed. The Master told Deepak, "Why don't you share with us in a few minutes, your experience in this retreat?" Deepak was surprised. He was not prepared for it. Though he was taken aback, he agreed to speak at his Master's behest. He did not know what he was speaking.

Earlier that afternoon, words had been flowing out of Deepak's pen without Deepak making an effort. The only

difference now was that they were flowing out of his lips. Sitting on his knees, at the feet of his Master, Deepak said, "Life is Liberation from Ignorance and Finding true Enlightenment. We human beings do not realize the true meaning of Life. We do not discover the true purpose of Life. We waste our Life and then it is too late. We live in misery and sorrow due to our ignorance. We do not realize the Truth of who we are and why we are here. I am grateful to everybody in the monastery. You have all been so kind and so supportive. You are all blessed by the grace of the Master and the Divine. I am indebted to our Master for showing me the way to the realization of the Truth. With what words should I express my gratitude? I am falling short of words. Our Master is a manifestation of the Divine. We are blessed to have the opportunity to spend time with him, listening to him and learning from him. I wish, hope and pray, that my Life hereafter continues to be what it was in the last 3 months here. Although I go back to the world, I go back as one who has realized the Truth, not as a body, mind, and ego. With the grace of the Master and the Divine, I hope to live a Life Liberated from Ignorance as I have Found true Enlightenment here. I seek the blessings of the Master."

"

What is Life? Have you ever thought?
Or in worldly desires you are caught?
It is Liberation from Ignorance to start,
And then Finding true Enlightenment in body, mind, and heart.

"

CHAPTER 13 IN A NUTSHELL

Life is Liberation from Ignorance and Finding true Enlightenment

- Life is all about Liberation. It is overcoming Ignorance.
- We can realize the Truth when we discriminate between the Truth and the myth. Discrimination is possible by using the intellect. The intellect is normally enslaved by the mind.
- The mind is our biggest enemy. It bombards us with thoughts and creates fear, worry, stress, and anxiety. Along with the ego, it makes us suffer. We have to transcend both ego and mind if we want to live by the intellect.
- For this, we need discipline, not just discipline of the body, but also discipline of the mind. We must live with dispassion and detachment, knowing that nothing belongs to us. Everything that is ours will soon cease to be ours. The one and only thing that will remain is our relationship with the Divine.
- This world is not real. It is Maya, a cosmic illusion. It is a Divine drama of the Creator. It is his Leela. Everything is a manifestation of the Divine. That is why the world is so beautiful. It is because of our ignorance that we see the beauty but we do not see the Divinity. When the Divine departs, there is nothing left.
- We all live in ignorance and thus we suffer. Suffering can be overcome by the realization of the Truth, which leads to true Enlightenment, to a Life of bliss and peace.

AFTERWORD

For 25 years, my Life was all about chasing success. It started when I was 16 and it went on till I was 40. I was blind to everything else. Nothing else mattered to me. It was all about sales in my retail stores, success, achievement, and money in the bank. And I was a hero! Everything I touched seemed to turn to gold. I achieved all my dreams and goals. I was truly excited. There was no time to look back. I thought I was really happy. What else does a man need? I had all the pleasures in the world that I could dream of – expensive cars, holidays around the world, and every other thing that you can imagine a man would want to be happy.

My Life changed because of my Spiritual Master, Dada J. P. Vaswani. He was my mentor since I was about 25. He saw me succeed and he encouraged my success. But his own Life was an inspiration for me to exit from the highway of achievement and to start looking for meaning in Life. Probably, I was blessed with the grace of the Divine to meet my Master, just as I was blessed to be compassionate, loving, and kind.

In the first 10 years of my success, between the age of 16 and 25, I always shared the fruits of my success. I shared it with my team, my family, my near and dear ones and also with those who were downtrodden and the discarded on the streets. As I look back upon those acts of service, I

wonder what made me do it. After working for close to 14 hours a day, I used to go out at nights with food packets searching for the hungry and the destitute, those who had not eaten anything the whole day. I found that there were dozens on the streets of Bangalore and this humanitarian service became a part of my Life. When I met these unfortunate people and spoke to them, I realized that many of them were freezing in the cold winter nights. So, I would buy blankets to distribute every winter to those who were homeless in the cold and experiencing those chill winter nights.

My success only multiplied manyfold. It was a 'rags to riches' story as I had started with practically nothing. My father was very supportive, and he was the foundation of my success. He encouraged all the business risks I took and guided me to achieve every goal, just as he supported my humanitarian activities.

The next 15 years of my Life, from 25 to 40, saw a strange pattern unfold. On one side, my business kept growing and our net worth kept increasing. On the other side, my Life became so much more meaningful as I kept increasing my humanitarian and other activities.

I was blessed and inspired to build a huge temple of Lord Shiva, 65-feet-tall on Old Airport Road, Bangalore. While I am very spiritual now and not religious, the first few decades of my Life were built on the foundation of faith in my God.

My Life completely transformed when I was 40. My spiritual Master made me realize that my Life had a greater meaning. I shut down my business and shocked the world with my exit from the retail industry and started doing what I was passionate about. I did H.I.S work – Humanitarian, Inspirational and Spiritual work. I dedicated more of my time to serve the poor and set up 3 charitable institutions which were home for over 600 poor and destitute people, who were discarded by their family. We set up clinics and hospitals and reached out to those who were suffering on the streets and helped put them back on their feet. My spiritual work also grew as I tried to help people believe in a power called God although I now realize that, at that time I was more religious, rather than spiritual.

I was a good motivator. I started going around the world giving talks, helping people find a better way to live. I felt I was the happiest man in the world. I travelled to over 100 countries to discover the beautiful world that God has made. I visited Antarctica and was amazed at the penguins I saw there. I felt I was so blessed to live such a Life and I sincerely looked at ways to help people exit from a mundane Life of just succeeding and making money. I could see that they were blind to the reality of Life and all they would do was to zoom from their womb to their tomb trying to achieve success.

I lived this Life for about 6 years, a time when I became

closer to my Spiritual Master. Then one day he made me realize, "You have achieved pleasure through achievement, and I know you are peaceful with your contentment and fulfillment. When will you go on a quest to find the true purpose of Life, Enlightenment?"

By now I was 46 years old. It took me one year to organize myself on my Master's advice. But it seemed like I was just going around in circles. I was busy giving inspirational talks, expanding my charitable activities and singing Bhajans or spiritual songs at my temple. After one year, my Master questioned me again, "Have you gone on a quest to realize the Truth?" It was Greek to me and I wondered what quest did he want me to go on. I struggled to understand, but this time I was committed to trying. I asked him to guide me and he did.

"Start with a question," he said, "find out - who am I?" "What do you mean?" I answered. "I know who I am." "You don't," he replied, "You are ignorant of the Truth! Go on a quest to find self-realization." These are terms that I struggled with. When he said, 'Tat Tvam Asi', I recalled that was the theme of his spiritual Sadhana camp over 20 years ago. "What is my Master seeking of me?" I wondered. His first direction to me to start a Talaash or quest, was on the auspicious Buddha Poornima day in 2012. It was exactly one year later, on the very same day, that he pushed me once again to go on a quest. It was not so difficult for me as I had a team who could take care of all

my work. Handing over responsibilities to trusted ones, I went on a retreat into the mountains alone with the sole objective of finding answers to my questions.

Before going on a retreat, with my Master's advice, I picked up hundreds of books from all the religions of the world – the Bible, the Quran, the Bhagavad Gita, the Guru Granth Sahib. I left nothing behind. There were books from Buddhist masters, just as I picked writings from Confucius, Lao Tzu, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Jainism. I might have missed some names here, but in 2013, I missed nothing. I picked up books by all the spiritual saints that I could lay my hands on – Adi Shankara, Ramana Maharishi, Vivekananda, Sadhu Vaswani, Swami Sivananda, Swami Chinmayananda, Rumi, and other Sufi saints. The list is endless. If I make an index of the books I read, I would have to write another book on that!

What did I do? I was in search of the Truth. I wanted to find out what my Master provoked me to. I used to meet Dada, as I called my Spiritual Master with love, every month to review the progress of my quest. For one year, I was hardly seen in Bangalore, where I lived. For weeks together, I was in retreat – sometimes in the Himalayas in Kullu-Manali. Other times, I would be in the Alps in Switzerland or even in the Maldives. I was contemplating Life. Who am I? Why am I here? What is Life all about? What is the purpose of Life? Who is God, what is God, where is God? Where are heaven and hell? What happens after death? Will I be

reborn? Does the law of Karma really work? What is Realization, Liberation, Salvation, and Enlightenment? What is Moksha, Mukti and Nirvana? I read on and on. I never stopped. I wanted to find answers to those questions.

In a few weeks, I was able to distinguish between what was a myth and what was the Truth. I tried to study ancient civilizations and how Life had evolved over the years. I was surprised to find that records were available only for the last 5000 years and everything before the pre-history period was assumptions. Scientists presume that civilizations existed millions of years ago. But can we justify that? Further, it hardly mattered. What mattered was our Life, from birth to death. What mattered was that I find out the purpose of my Life. I focused on 9 questions as I was in retreat in the mountains. Most of my realizations are covered in this book. I too had gone through the process, first of self-realization, realizing who I was not and then, realizing who I was. Then I started my quest to discover God. My Master used to say, "God defined, is God denied." We have not been given the power to comprehend God. If I ask you to shut your eyes and see me with your ears, can you? You can't because the ears don't have the power to comprehend sight. So also, human beings don't have the power to comprehend God. God must be realized intuitively, through the power of our superconscious. This is only possible when we first realize the Truth about ourselves, then slowly, if we are blessed with the Divine grace, we will realize God.

God is everywhere, in everything. But we are spiritually blind. We cannot see God. If I am wearing a T-shirt, you can see the T-shirt, but you do not see the threads that are woven into the T-shirt. We see all the beauty in this world, and we think that this is a beautiful creation of God, but we don't realize that this is God. It is not a creation of God; it is a manifestation of God. Because we are caught in Maya, the cosmic illusion projected on earth, we are unable to realize the Truth.

On the 31st of August, 2014, when I was on an Air France flight AF 192, from Paris to Bangalore, I experienced my spiritual 'Aha!' moment. I realized the Truth about Life. I realized that Life is Liberation from Ignorance and Finding true Enlightenment. We human beings chase happiness, but we can never be happy because we are imprisoned in ignorance. Until we are liberated from this ignorance, we will never be free to realize the Truth. I feel grateful that I went on a quest and in less than 2 years, I was able to realize the Truth. There are people who don't realize it in 20 years, many even in 20 lifetimes. I am grateful to both my spiritual Master, and my Lord, the Divine. Once we realize we are not the ego, mind, and body, then we are liberated from all suffering. If we live as a realized Soul then we may be liberated from the cycle of death and rebirth. When we realize the Truth, then we can evolve from self-realization to God-realization. If we are free from the world, then we are truly enlightened, and we are ready for Divine unification at death. It is not as easy as it seems.

One has to live in Yoga, in constant union with the Divine, with discrimination and dispassion, detached from people and possessions. One must be highly disciplined in body and mind. One must love God with what my Master called the 'Triple Yearning': the yearning a miser has for gold, the yearning a child has for its mother who it has just lost and the yearning a lover has for his beloved. If we have the triple yearning, and we desire the Divine and liberation and nothing else, then we can achieve true Enlightenment.

Afterall, what is Life? It is Liberation from Ignorance and Finding true Enlightenment. If not, we just live and die, only to be reborn based on our Karma. The cycle will continue again and again. Every time we are born, however happy we may be, we will suffer as the ego, mind and body, experience disease, decay and death. This is not what Life is meant to be. We must realize the true purpose of Life. We must go on a quest so that we are liberated from ignorance and we achieve the Ultimate Goal of Life – True Enlightenment.

May this book inspire you to stop existing and start living. May you go in quest for the Truth. May you too be Liberated from Ignorance, experience self-realization and ultimately Find true Enlightenment.

“

After 50 years of living Life,
Enjoying bliss and experiencing strife,
Finally, I realized what Life is,
Being free from ignorance and finding bliss.

”

POEM

What is Life, have you ever thought?
It is not just to exist, have you forgot?
Is there a greater purpose for us here on earth?
Is there more to achieve in this human birth?

We humans want to be happy, but why are we sad?
We live in ignorance and feel that Life is bad
When will we stop and go on a quest?
When will we be enlightened and in peace will we rest?

We are all prisoners, we are not free
We all live in cages, suffering is our fee
Because we don't find out what is the Truth
We live in ignorance and we face the brute!

I too lived in ignorance for 40 long years
I lived with anxiety and I lived with my fears
Until one day I found out what was true
And then my Life changed with happy colours and hues

My Spiritual Master asked me to go on a quest
To put every belief of mine to test
"Wake up," he said, "and realize the truth
Ask and investigate till you get to the root!"

I found that happiness has 3 little peaks
But man is so petty, just pleasure he seeks
Few of us are lucky, we are content with our need
And don't become prisoners of our lust and our greed

The ego and the mind, they both make us sad
We think these are us, but they are the ones who are bad
They are our biggest enemies, they stop the realization
From ignorance and suffering, our Life's liberation

When we realize who we are and why we are here
We become free from ignorance and every possible tear
We can then live blissfully with happiness and cheer
Today and tomorrow, and right through the year

Happiness is all about being in the now
Not shuttling in thoughts and losing a Life that's wow
The past is gone, the future not yet born
But we waste our Life as this shuttling goes on

What is Life, have you ever thought?
"Are you just existing?" this question you forgot
If we are liberated from myth and ignorance
Then our Life will have a new fragrance

There are many beliefs that create unhappiness
We live with superstitions, the truth we miss
But because these are things that we all have been taught
We accept these things which in fact must be forgot

Don't we see that nothing is ours at death?
Life is a journey and lasts till our breath
The fact is that we have just a few years to live
Why hate and regret, why not just forgive?

We all want to be happy and we chase success
We think that success is happiness
But when we look around, we find the rich are sad
If money could create happiness, then the rich should be glad

Fools we are, in ignorance we live
We can be happy if we just learn to give
Instead, we earn and earn and earn
Only for others to burn what we earn

We don't realize that death is not the end
The body dies but for the mind, it's just a bend
There is a Universal Law on earth
As per our actions, will be our rebirth

I learned about things that make people cry
We wail in misery without asking questions, "Why?"
Life is a treasure, and this gift we lose
Because we don't discriminate, because we don't choose

Our goal is Liberation, to be free from the myth
The purpose of Life is to realize the truth
I learned that if we go on a quest, we will find
Joy, peace, and bliss of a very different kind

But instead, we are building fortunes that will not be ours
Sure, we may be rich and have monetary showers
But what is the use if our heart is full of tears
What is the use of Life if it is filled with fears!

Because we don't understand the true meaning of Life
We live with misfortune, with misery and strife
Rather we must go on a quest, the Truth to find
And be Enlightened about Ego, Body and Mind

Our goal is just one - to merge with the Divine
Instead, we live chasing wealth, women, and wine
We go on and on like rats in this race
Don't reach our destination, we get caught in the maze

There are in this world just a lucky fortunate few
Who wake up every morning before the sky turns blue
They meditate, they contemplate the true meaning of Life
They cut through the ignorance with a sharp little knife

They are the ones who live a Life full of bliss
They love all, knowing love is not just a kiss
They overcome the ignorance that envelops most of us
They find true enlightenment in Divinity that surrounds us

What is Life in the final analysis?
It's about being peaceful and finding happiness
But far more than just living with bliss and Joy
Is to discover Life's purpose before Life goes by

What is Life, the Truth we must know
It's Liberation from Ignorance knowing this is just a show
It's about Realization that gives us Liberation
Finding true Enlightenment and Divine Unification

By
AiR
Atman in Ravi

About the Author – AiR Atman in Ravi

AiR – *Atman* in Ravi, is an embodied Soul whose only mission in Life is to help people realize the Truth. He was born in Bangalore on October 15, 1966. At a very young age, Ravi V. Melwani mastered the craft of business and became a very successful businessman who revolutionized retailing in India with the stores KidsKemp, Big KidsKemp, and Kemp Fort.

After making millions, he realized that Life is not just about making money. He shut down his business at the age of 40, transformed his Life from Ravi V. Melwani to RVM, living by the RVM philosophy – Rejoice, Value Life, and Make a Difference. He started doing H.I.S. work – Humanitarian, Inspirational and Spiritual work. His mission was to 'Make a Difference' in this world before his journey was over.

As a part of the humanitarian initiative, a charitable hospital and charitable homes were set up with an aim to provide free medical treatment and care to the poor, destitute, and needy. Today, over 600 homeless and suffering people are served and cared for in destitute homes and provided with free shelter, food, clothing, and medical care.

A School of Inspiration was set up that inspired the lives of many people through motivating talks, inspirational books and videos, and thought-provoking quotes.

A Shiva Temple was built in the year 1995 in Bangalore, which is now known as the Shivoham Shiva Temple. AiR now believes that religion is just a kindergarten of Spirituality, and we all have to go beyond religion to truly realize God.

One day, his Guru provoked him to introspect: What is the purpose of Life? Is Life just meant to seek pleasures and to live and die without any purpose? What happens after death? Will we be reborn? Where is God? Several questions like these took him on a quest, a search for the Truth. He gave up his Life of Achievement and Fulfillment in search of the final peak of Life: Enlightenment.

After a few years of intense search in retreat, deep in the mountains, he realized that we are not this Body. We are the Soul, the Atman. He changed his name to AiR –*Atman* in Ravi. He metamorphosed to AiR and gave up his entire Life as RVM and started living as an instrument of God doing His Divine Will. This led to several Realizations that formed his new mission of Life – to help people Realize the Truth.

Since then, AiR's Life has been dedicated to reaching out and helping people to eradicate the ignorance that we live in. While the Truth is the Truth, our mind still resists from accepting it. Based on his realizations, AiR has published several books, written bhajans, blogs, quotes and poems

and has taken up several other initiatives that can direct people towards the Truth. His vision, now, is to help people to Ask, Investigate, and Realize. He believes that unless people ask questions, they will never start a quest and even if they start the quest unless they really investigate, they will not realize the Truth. This Truth cannot be learned in a school, college or university, it must be realized. AiR has dedicated his Life to helping people realize the Truth.

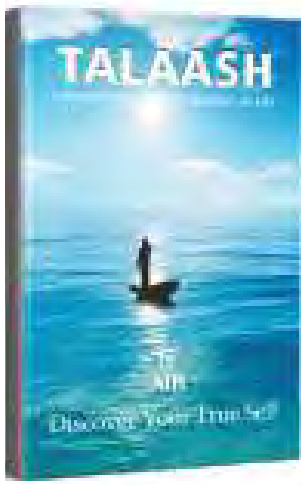
“

Started with nothing ...
Became something...
Achieved everything,
Only to realize we are nothing!

”

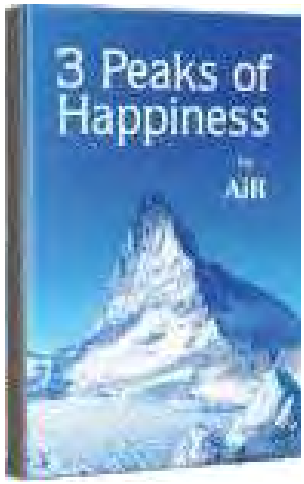
BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

1. Talaash



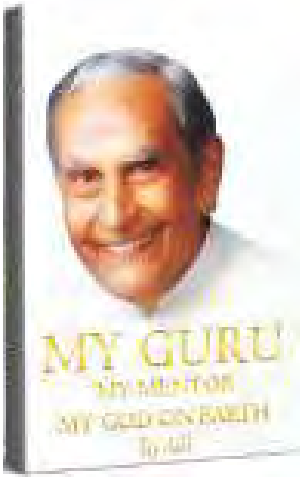
'Talaash' means Search or Quest. This book by AiR is his personal journey to realize the Truth where he shares his Realization that we are not the Body and the Mind that we seem to be. We are Power. The Divine life force is known as Soul, Spirit or Atman. This search and quest by AiR made him transform his life. It is a quest that made him realize the Truth. It might be just that book which inspires you to attain Liberation.

2. 3 Peaks of Happiness



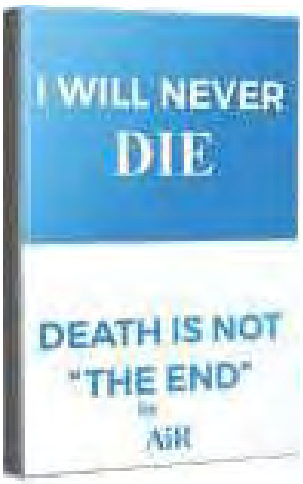
'3 Peaks of Happiness' by AiR is a simple book that talks about the quest of all humanity. Everybody wants to be happy. But is everybody happy? No. The reason is we are stuck on the first peak of Happiness – Achievement. Only about 20% of the people are lucky to climb the second peak of Happiness – Fulfillment, which comes from contentment. But there is a third peak beyond. The third peak of Happiness will liberate you from the prisons of misery and sorrow and give you eternal Joy and Bliss.

3. My Guru, My Mentor, My God on Earth



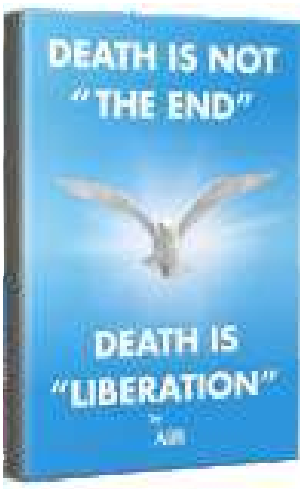
In this book AiR shares his experiences with his Guru who was not just his Guru and Mentor, but also his God on Earth. We all need a coach, a teacher to help us understand, guide us to live life and this book 'My Guru' will inspire you to find your Guru or to make your relationship with your Guru more fulfilling and meaningful.

4. I will Never Die. Death is not "The End"



In the journey of his life, AiR realized many Truths. One of the Truths was that he would never die. The body will die, but the one who lives in the body never dies. We are not the body that we wear; we are the ones who wear the body. Death is not the end. It is a bend to transcend. This book reveals the Truth about Death.

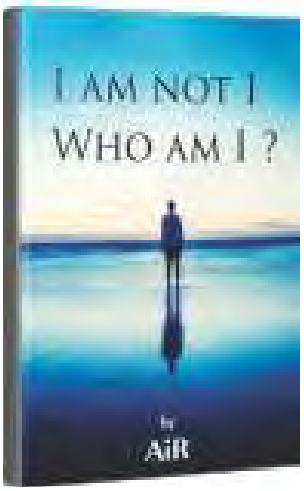
5. Death is Not "The End". Death is "Liberation"



This second book in the series of books on death by AiR – touches on the secret of the Kathopanishad, which talks about what happens at death. One of two things happens – if we think we are the body and mind as a doer, we

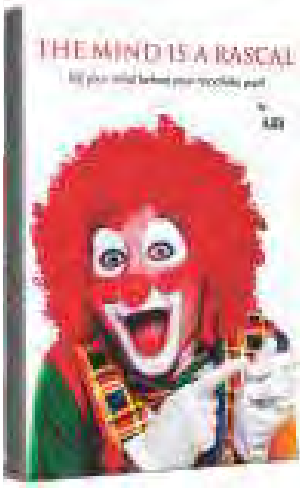
are reborn. But if we think we are not the body and mind, but the Energy, we are liberated to eternal Joy and Peace.

6. I am not I. Who am I?



Here, AiR talks of his quest and Realization that we are not who we think we are. We have a house, but we are not the house. We have a car, but we are not the car. We have a body, but we are not the body. We may have a mind, but we are not the mind. Who are we? Realize the Truth.

7. The Mind is a Rascal



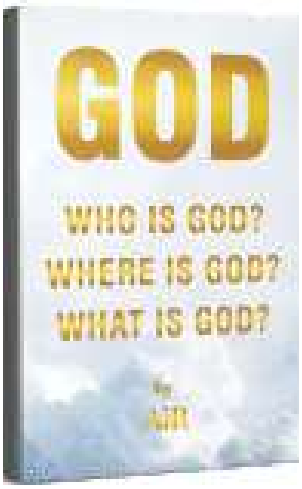
Can you believe that the mind is a rascal? You always thought that the mind is king – that it is everything. But just try this. Sit quietly for an hour, and try to find the mind. Where is it? You will find that the mind doesn't exist. This amazing book by AiR will teach us that the mind is our enemy. It is the one that makes us suffer. It is time to find the rascal and to kill it. How do we do this?

8. A Cosmic Drama

This book authored by AiR challenges us to think that whatever is happening in life is not real. It is nothing but a drama.

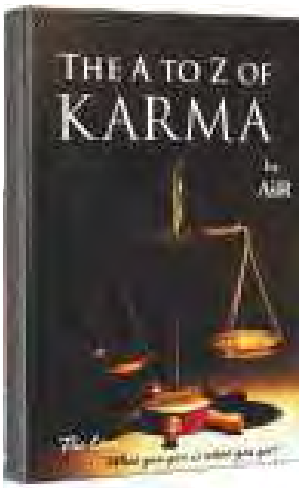
The earth is a big stage, and we are all actors who come and go. There is no need to worry and cry till we die. If we understand the Truth, we can enjoy the show called life.

9. Who is God? Where is God? What is God?



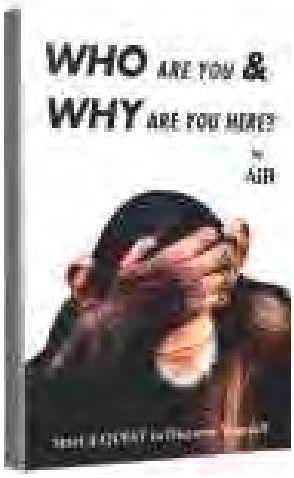
Well, this might seem to be a simple set of questions, but nobody really knows the answers. We all know that God exists. We pray to a God as per our religion but what is the Truth about God? Has anybody seen God? Where is God? This simple book will change your perception and belief about God and bring you closer to the Power called God. It will help you realize God.

10. The A to Z of Karma



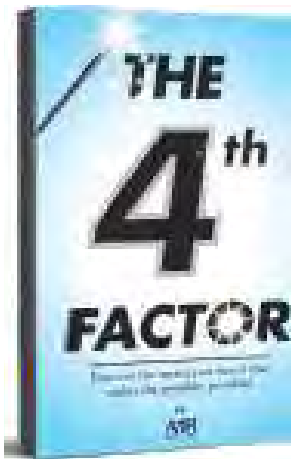
Most people are aware of the concept of Karma – the law that states, "What you give is what you get." But not everybody knows the A to Z of Karma, that we can actually transcend Karma, escape from it and achieve Moksha, Nirvana, Liberation or Enlightenment. This book reveals the secret – of eternal Joy and Peace - a life without any misery or suffering.

11. Who Are You & Why Are You Here?



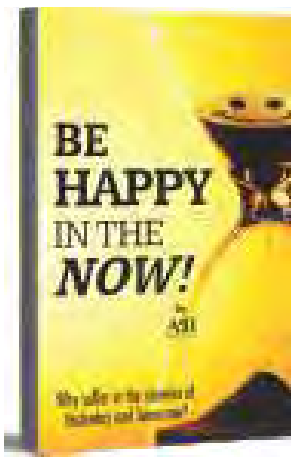
This is a simple book which challenges us to discover the secret of our life. Most of us think we are the body-mind complex, but in reality, we are not. The body will die and return to dust. Where is the mind, we cannot find. Who are we in reality? And beyond that what is the purpose of life on earth? This book will give you all the answers.

12. The 4th Factor



Man thinks that he can achieve anything. He believes that there is nothing in this world he can't do. But, he doesn't realize that his efforts and equipment are not enough to decide the results of his actions. Sometimes, he does his best but things don't work out the way he wants. He then realizes the importance of the 4th Factor, a factor that makes the possible, possible and without its consent even the possible becomes impossible.

13. Be Happy in the NOW!



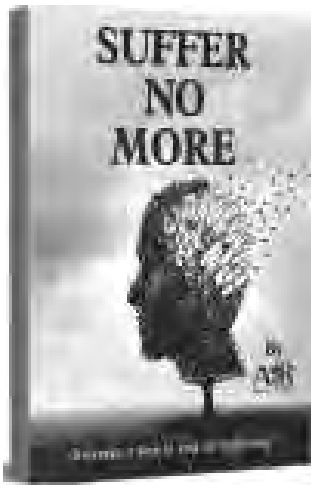
Every human being on earth wants to be Happy. There is nobody who enjoys pain. People want to achieve Happiness but they fail

to realize that Happiness is the journey itself, not the destination. Then, what is the secret of eternal Joy, Bliss, and Peace? It is being Happy in the NOW. Every time we let the suffering of yesterday take charge of our life, we destroy the Joy of today. When our thoughts anxiously jump into what may happen in the future, we lose the tranquility of the present moment. We seem to be like helpless monkeys jumping from one branch to another, from yesterday to tomorrow. And in the bargain, we lose the gift of being Happy in the present. With this book, AiR hopes to inspire people to live life moment by moment, if they really want to be Happy.

14. Questions You Must Answer Before You Die

Most of us live and die but we don't ask the question – Why? We just exist! We don't want to invest time in asking essential questions that are actually needed to lead a fulfilling and blissful life. There are so many critical questions that we must answer before our journey of life is over. What will happen to us after we die? Who created this universe? How can we be Happy all the time? Who is God, where is God, what is God? Like this, there are so many questions which we are ignorant about and somehow, we believe that ignorance is bliss. We blissfully live in ignorance till we die. Isn't it time to stop and ask questions?

15. Suffer No More



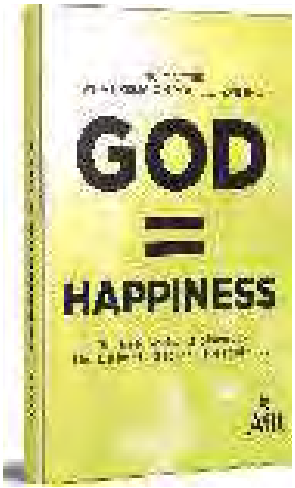
'Suffer No More' is a personal experience of overcoming anguish, anxiety, distress, and grief. We all suffer physical pain. Who on earth can escape from it? But while there is pain, can we do away with the suffering? What is suffering? While we all experience it, have we gone on a quest to understand what the primary cause of misery is? We live in this ignorance, this myth, that suffering is an unavoidable part of life. We can be free from suffering if only we realize that we are the prisoners of negative emotions that continue to make us miserable. Suffer No More is an analysis of suffering, what causes it and how we can overcome it. If one wants to truly live with eternal Joy and everlasting Peace, it's possible! This book will help you Realize the Truth and Suffer No More!

16. Success is not Happiness... Happiness is Success

Everybody wants to succeed. If one goes deep into the psychology of winning, one will realize that people want to win because this makes them Happy, just as failure makes them miserable. People want to succeed and they do everything possible to win because they want to be happy. In fact, humanity, by and large, believes that Success is like a cause, of which

happiness is the effect. In the present book, the readers will discover the reality that Success equals Happiness is an illusion. No doubt Success creates a sense of gratification that makes us Happy but Real Happiness is beyond achievement. It is contentment and fulfillment. It's time for us to realize the Truth. Instead of chasing Success to be Happy, we should try to be Happy. That is true success. We must realize that Success is not Happiness, Happiness is Success.

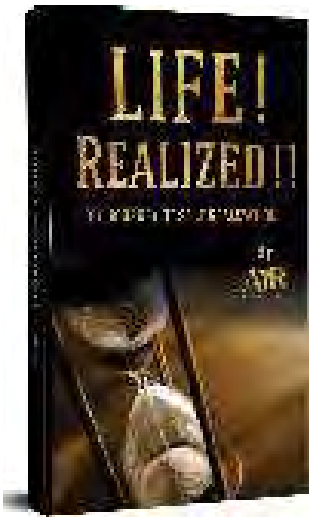
17. God = Happiness



We understand what it means to be happy, especially when we compare it to those times when we are miserable and unhappy. But how exactly is our state of joy or sorrow connected to God, remains a mystery. Yes, we pray thinking of God as somebody in heaven who has a magic wand with which he controls our Happiness. But is this true or is there something else that we are ignorant about? In his quest to discover Truth and the purpose of life, the author found answers that liberated him from misery and sorrow. He also realized that people didn't know where exactly to search for Happiness. All pray to God but do we know the Real Truth about God? We may believe in any religion but that hardly matters, because God is beyond religion. While we evolve in life, we don't spiritually evolve to realize that God is far more powerful than what we imagine.

This book is not about religion. It takes us far beyond religion to Realize the Truth about God and how God is Happiness.

18. Life! Realized!!



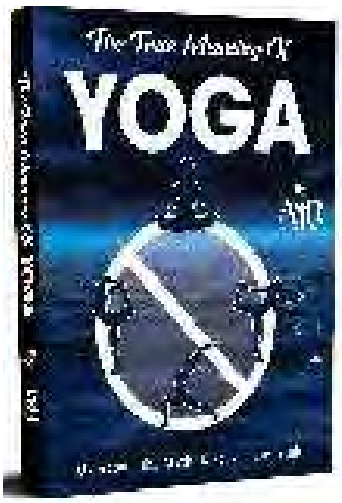
The present book is a personal reflection of the author who has written several books on life, happiness, and almost everything that matters in the life journey. Like anybody else, he too spent many years of his life chasing success and money but then, he took an exit from this first peak of happiness - Achievement, transformed his life and started living with Contentment and Fulfillment. He realized that what mattered the most was his Life Realization. There were many questions in his mind and after a profound investigation, he discovered the Truth. He decided to pen down all his realizations together to share them with the world. Those who wish to start a quest of self-realization and God-realization must read this book as it will direct them towards the path which will help them realize the Truth.

19. True Love is Bliss...Not Just a Kiss

True Love is bliss, not just a kiss. It is sad that Love which is the source of joy and happiness, is not understood by the world. The world thinks

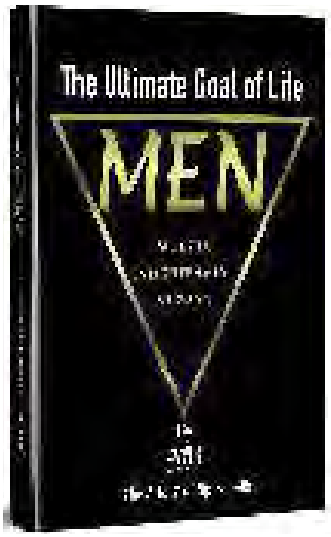
of Love to be just hugs and kisses, romance and sex. Is this True Love? No. True Love is Love from the Soul. It is Divine Love that manifests as Love from the day we are born to the day we die. Stop! Discover True Love and live your life with eternal bliss and joy.

20. True Meaning of Yoga



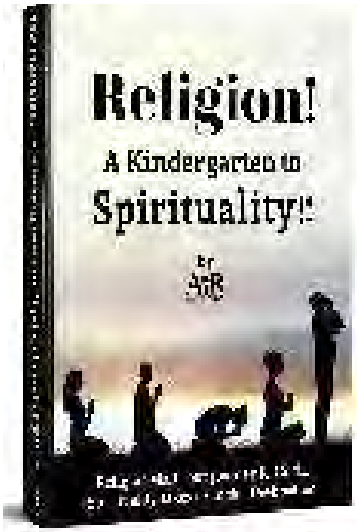
Yoga, today, is primarily taught as a set of body postures or Asanas. Some take it a step further and include breathing exercises referred to as Pranayama. But this is not true Yoga! This may be good for our physical well-being but true Yoga is something completely different. Those who think that Yoga is just about stretching the body will be in for a big surprise when they read this book. It will trigger their mind and help them overcome the misconceptions about Yoga. Yoga, in reality, is a Union with the Divine. There is no doubt that as part of the entire Yogic experience, some saints advocated certain body postures and breathing exercises to be a part of the overall Yoga practice, but most definitely, these by themselves are not Yoga. This book attempts to explain everything about Yoga, its actual meaning and significance, how it must be practised and how through Yoga, one can be liberated and experience Ultimate Bliss and Divine Peace.

21. The Ultimate Goal of Life, MEN – Moksha, Enlightenment, Nirvana



What is the Ultimate Goal of life? The whole world believes it is to be happy, to escape from misery and suffering. If we want to escape from all misery to live a life of Eternal Peace and Everlasting Joy, the answer is MEN -Moksha, Enlightenment, and Nirvana. These are the three most tenable concepts that help us reach our Ultimate Goal of Liberation and then Unification with the Divine. The words may be different, but this is the one secret to everlasting Happiness. Let us discover how to live a life that teaches us the A to Z of Spirituality and helps us achieve Bliss and Peace. This book will show us a path that is beyond religion, a path that will make us Realize the Truth and will liberate us from misery and sorrow.

22. Religion! A Kindergarten to Spirituality



We don't choose our Religion. When we are born, we start following a Religion based on our family's belief system. Each Religion says that its God is the Creator of this world and we grow up having faith in our Religion. We practice religious dogmas without understanding what we are doing. Very few of us actually touch the

subject of Spirituality - a study of the Spirit, the Soul or the Life-Energy within us. Less than 1% of humanity stops and asks questions about the validity of what their Religion preaches and passionately follows the path of Spirituality with the aim of Self-Realization and God-Realization. They realize the Truth about God and understand that whatever they were taught was very basic, that Religion is just a kindergarten to Spirituality. The present book explains the fact that Religion is only the first step towards God-Realization but we get so pulled into rituals and superstitions that we do not pursue a Spiritual path that makes us investigate the Truth about God.

23. Why Bad things can't Happen to Good people!

Somebody questioned AiR, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" He answered without a doubt, "Bad things can't happen to good people, just like apples can't grow on mango trees. Such is the law of the universe." While AiR sent out his answer to the question, he realized that many people in this world live in ignorance with this belief and it is really sad that they think that bad things happen to good people. This made him write this book. Many authors and philosophers have questioned the power of the Divine. But the present book by AiR will help us understand the truth that this world has been

created by the Divine and it operates through certain Universal Laws. These laws need no intervention by the Creator. We must understand that the Creator is not micromanaging the problems that confront us. Whatever happens to people is controlled by a law and very few people are fortunate to discover this secret as to why things happen, both good and bad, to every human being who lives on earth.

Now

24. LIFE is...

Liberation from Ignorance and Finding true Enlightenment

Coming Soon

25. The Ladder to Heaven

If you have any questions on happiness, suffering, success, life, rebirth, liberation or anything related to spirituality, you can visit Ask AiR, ask your questions and AiR will answer them.

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||Om Namah Shivaya|| ||Shivoham||

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Life is...

Liberation from Ignorance and Finding true Enlightenment

What is Life all about? Are we meant to live just to die? Is there a larger purpose or a deeper meaning to Life?

Everybody who is born in this world must die. Can we escape death? While we can't, there is a way to escape from suffering in this world and from taking rebirth again and again based on our own past actions or Karma.

A very few people are fortunate to discover the secret of what Life truly is. The purpose of Life is to be Liberated from Ignorance and to Find true Enlightenment. How can we do this?

This book is an interesting dialogue that will reveal the path taken by a seeker in his quest to realize the Truth and ultimately to be liberated from misery and suffering. You too can go an a quest and be enlightened about what Life truly is!

By
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